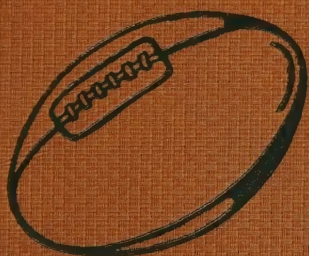


BLOCK THAT KICK!



HAROLD M. SHERMAN



JIM SUNDERLAND



750
-

BLOCK THAT KICK!



THE STILLNESS OF THE NIGHT WAS BROKEN BY A SECOND SHARP
REPORT.

Block That Kick!

Frontispiece (Page 134)

BLOCK THAT KICK!

BY

HAROLD M. SHERMAN

AUTHOR OF
ONE MINUTE TO PLAY
TOUCHDOWN!
HIT BY PITCHER
BASES FULL, ETC.

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1928, BY
GROSSET & DUNLAP, INC.

All Rights Reserved

MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In Grateful Appreciation
To The Cast Of
“THE LAST INSTALLMENT”

Produced by Marion Talent
INDIANA THEATRE
Nights of March 16-17, 1927

Mary Renbarger
Jesse Tippey
John Rhue
Elmer Gowing
Arthur Eberhardt
Mrs. Frank Tolle
Dorothy Barrett
Jack Foster
James Brown
Paul Kepner
Ralph Bent
Frank Tukey
D. A. Earnhart
Thos. “Piggy” Doyle

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS . . .	1
II ANNE HAS A CALLER . . .	16
III BUZZ FINISHES HIS MASTERPIECE .	33
IV EVENTS COMMENCE TO SIMMER .	48
V BITTER ACCUSATIONS . . .	72
VI A BAFFLING HAPPENING . . .	83
VII BUZZ GETS GREAT NEWS . . .	95
VIII MISTAKEN IDENTITY . . .	115
IX RUSTY SCORES A TRIUMPH . . .	143
X A PLAYWRIGHT HAS HIS TROUBLES	156
XI AN UNHAPPY ENDING . . .	175
XII A SECRET PROPOSAL . . .	204
XIII MISSING! . . .	228
XIV ANXIOUS MOMENTS . . .	252
XV A DUAL BATTLE . . .	267
XVI THE RACE AGAINST TIME . . .	290
XVII FOR THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP	304

BLOCK THAT KICK!

CHAPTER I

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

“STOP him!”

A dodging, dashing figure clad in a tattered blue jersey zig-zagged through a field of madly moving forms, mud-spattered pigskin in the hollow of one arm, eyes intent on a white-caked goal line ten yards distant. It was the last hot scrimmage for the Bartlett College varsity before one of the season's big games and Bob Delano, star fullback, had broken through the battered Reserves' line for what looked to be a touchdown. And Coach Edwards had just done admonishing the lowly scrubs because they hadn't been able to stop him!

“I'll stop him!” said Reserve quarterback Pie Custer, grimly, as the Bartlett flash loomed before him, “He'll not get by me!”

“Stop him, eh?” repeated Rusty Milburn,

Reserve fullback, cutting across the field in a desperate effort to drive the man with the ball out of bounds, "Just let me get my hands on him!"

There were several reasons, particularly, why Rusty would like to down Delano. The main one was that he had played second fiddle to this fellow long enough. Due to Bob's brilliance as a triple threat man in Bartlett's crack backfield, Rusty had been able to qualify only as substitute fullback. And today Coach Edwards had placed him on the Reserves to strengthen their line-up in the running through of Hale University plays against the first team.

"See how good an imitation you can give us of Ben Ferdy, Hale's big siege gun," the coach had directed, "I want to see how effective his plays are apt to be against us."

Effective? The first team had thrown him for heavy losses almost every time he had carried the ball. His heart hadn't really been in the play anyway. Why should he have been relegated to the ranks of the scrubs when he had made the regulars? Coach hadn't ever given him a fair break. This Bob Delano had

been a sensation since the start of the season, his work just naturally eclipsing whatever anyone else had done. And, so far as he—Rusty—was concerned, there wasn't a chance to show much as long as Bob was in there. As long as. . . .

"If he should get hurt!" thought the substitute fullback as he ran, "The big games are coming up now. . . . Box him in, Pie! . . . I'll take him!"

But Bob, veering sharply, cut away from the sidelines, avoiding Rusty and attempting to knife through the remaining five yards between this would-be tackler and the eager arms of the Reserve quarterback. He had already scored three touchdowns to the delight of some two hundred student onlookers and this fourth, after his longest run of the scrimmage, would conclude a big afternoon for him. The newspaper reporters present would seize upon his exhibition to sound a warning through their sport columns that Bob Delano was in top form to stack up against the special defense Hale had builded with the avowed purpose of stopping him.

"Isn't Bob a wonder?" exclaimed Anne

Morgan, entranced, "There he goes—over!"

"But Pie tackled him!" cried Norma Packard, her room-mate. "Look at him squirm! Maybe it's not over. Oh!"

Struck down, almost at the goal line, the Bartlett star had flung his body forward and reached out with the ball. An instant later the form of Rusty Milburn had dived through the air, landing with a smacking thud upon his head and neck . . . and Bob had stiffened out—coldly inert.

"Oh, he's hurt!" shrieked Anne, putting fingers to lips grown colorless, "He doesn't move! He's knocked out!"

Fellow players hurried up as quarterback Custer turned the unconscious Delano over on his back and cleared the dirt from his eyes and nostrils.

"Quick! Water!" he cried.

"What's the matter with you, Rusty!" reprimanded Coach Edwards, rushing up, "No sense in your dropping on Bob at all! . . . He was over. Besides, this wasn't a life and death matter."

"You told us to stop him!" reminded the substitute fullback, "I was only trying . . ."

“Ought to have used better judgement!” snapped the coach as he straddled the prostrate form and commenced raising and lowering the body to restore normal breathing, “You’d have been penalized for unnecessary roughness in any game on that play!”

The water boy came racing up, water sloshing over the side of his pail and splashing down his legs as he ran.

“Here, sir! Here’s the water! What ain’t spilled!”

Anxious-faced students crowded about.

“Back! Back! Give him air!” ordered Big Jim Baker, varsity left guard, elbowing the pressing circle.

Reserve quarterback Custer doused the end of a towel in the water pail and applied it to Bob’s face and head.

“Rusty landed right on his neck,” said Pie, nervously, “He doesn’t seem to be coming around, Coach . . . maybe . . .”

“Oh, it—it looks like Bob’s badly hurt!” whispered Anne, fearfully.

A student nearby, nudged another.

“Look! There’s Bob’s sweetie. Say, this is tough! If Bob’s lost to the team now Coach

Edwards might as well kiss goodbye to his dream of Bartlett's winning the first national football championship!"

"I'll say so!" agreed the other, dismally, "With us still to play such teams as Hale, Madison, Great Western and Pennington! . . . Why, Bob's practically won all our games for us as it is!"

The star fullback rolled his head and groaned.

"All right, let's get him to the clubhouse," directed Coach Edwards, "Someone call Doctor Thomas!"

Kindly hands lifted the Bartlett star waist high and bore him along evenly over the roughed up sod. Curious students straggled along after, fellow players taking care that they did not get too close.

"There's Rusty!" cried Anne, "Let's see if we can't call him over, Norma, and find out more about . . ."

"Don't know whether he'll stop now. We can try. Oh, Rusty!"

The substitute fullback, on his way to the clubhouse, glanced sidewise. At sight of the two girls he slowed up, looked debatingly to-

ward the entrance to the clubhouse, through which the still unconscious form was at that moment being carried, and turned, approaching the co-eds.

"I hope Anne doesn't blame me," he muttered to himself, "If she does . . .!"

"Oh, Rusty!" greeted Anne, clutching his arm, "What's happened? What's wrong with Bob! Anything serious?"

The face of the substitute fullback was strained.

"I—I don't think so," he replied, "Just a—a bad knockout, I guess."

"But you fell on him frightfully hard!" declared Anne, "You could hear it all over the field. Oh, I hope . . ."

"So do I," Rusty hastened to assure, "He'll be all right. Don't worry. You take some real bumps in this game sometimes . . . but it's very seldom . . ."

An excited student pushed his way in.

"You don't think his neck was broken, do you?" he blurted.

The substitute fullback started.

"No! 'Course not!"

"But did you notice how his head hung when

they carried him?" persisted the inquirer, "What was the idea of dropping on him anyway?"

The substitute fullback turned his back.

"Say, bo, I'm talking to you!"

The student grasped his sleeve. Other admirers of the one and only Bob Delano crowded around. Anne and Norma looked disturbed. Rusty glanced again toward the clubhouse. The other players had disappeared within.

"You were sore at Bob to begin with, weren't you?" charged another student.

"Sore? What would I have to be sore about?" the substitute fullback gave answer.

"Sore because you're not the player he is!" guessed a third, "You showed that in the Eckland game when you . . .!"

Rusty glanced uneasily at Anne and Norma.

"I'm sorry but I'll have to be turning in," he apologized, "If you like I'll come around and let you know how he is, soon as I know something."

"Would you do that?" begged Anne.

"We'd awfully like to know," seconded Norma.

"See that! He doesn't want to talk!"

pointed out his first inquirer, "And there's a darn good reason! Watch your step there, Rusty! We're wise to you!"

"Aw, you guys go chase yourselves!" retorted the substitute fullback, pushing his way through the crowd, "I don't have to answer to you. That's a lot o' rot!"

In the clubhouse players undressed and crawled under showers, conversing in hushed and shocked tones. Bob Delano was still unconscious. Everything was being done for him that could be done while the doctor's arrival was awaited. But whatever injury he had suffered, with each passing minute, seemed increasingly serious.

"Where's Rusty?" asked someone, suddenly.

"Hasn't come in yet," answered scrub quarterback Custer, "I saw him going over toward a couple girls . . ."

"Call him in at once!" ordered the coach.

Pie Custer started toward the door as the tardy player entered, confronting a tense-faced group.

"How—how is he?" he asked, biting his lips.

The players shook their heads.

"No better," answered Pie.

A look of actual terror crossed Rusty's face for the instant. He went toward his locker, fumbling at his jersey. What if . . .? No, it couldn't be! He hadn't meant to do anything like that! . . . Bob would snap out of it. He might not be able to play this Saturday but . . .!

"Hello, Doctor! Here he is, in here!"

A commotion at the other end of the lockers. Rusty half rose from the bench as members of the squad followed Doctor Thomas to the rubbing room where Bob had been laid out on a cot. Should he go in, too? No use. Nothing he could do and there were too many in there now. The substitute fullback sank back upon the bench and bent over, striving with fingers which shook to untie a knot in his shoe string.

"Couldn't say for certain but looks to me like he's suffered a slight concussion," was Dr. Thomas' diagnosis, after applying restoratives which had begun to bring Bob around. "Better get him to the hospital right away where we can examine him more closely. Where's the phone? I'll send for the ambulance."

From their room in the Hadden Dormitory, three blocks up the street, two greatly concerned girls heard the ambulance as it clanged past and looked at one another ominously. Students on the campus across the street turned inquiring heads after the speeding car. Those who had witnessed the scrimmage session and the tragic ending, offered quick explanations and many set off in the direction of the clubhouse.

“Bob must be in bad shape!” divined one.

And the news became electric. Delano out . . . with anything from a dislocated shoulder to a broken neck. Out of just the Hale game? No, for the season! Badly hurt? Why, didn’t you see him rushed to the hospital? Lingered between life and death! How was he injured? Rusty Milburn fell on him. No, just one of those things that you sometimes can’t avoid. Rusty was trying to prevent a touchdown. Yes, Coach Edwards did bawl Rusty out but he did it in the excitement of the moment. Coach was mighty upset over the thought of anything happening to Bob. Well, you never could tell. Bartlett might fight all the harder now. Chances are Coach would

play Rusty in Bob's place. But Rusty couldn't fill Bob's shoes in a month of Fridays.

As the injured Bartlett star was carried from the clubhouse to the ambulance, the fellow responsible for his injury, followed to the door, half-dressed.

"What did the Doc find out?" he asked, breathlessly, of Matt Chapin, first team quarterback.

Matt turned back from the door, soberly. "Doc didn't say much. Thinks there's been a concussion of the brain."

The substitute fullback winced.

"Man! I'm sorry to hear that!"

"Who isn't?" rejoined Ed Raymond, left half, "Bob Delano's a prince."

"Clear out of here, you guys!" ordered Stew Anderson, right half, "Coach said, just before he left, no hanging around the locker room to-night."

Obediently, those who had not finished dressing speeded up, flinging their football togs into lockers and snapping shut the doors. In five minutes the remaining members of the squad filed glumly from the clubhouse where they were met by an anxious crowd of students.

“How’d it happen?” a newcomer was heard to cry.

“Rusty dropped on him after he was tackled,” volunteered someone.

And the fellow responsible for the Bartlett star’s injury, bowing his head, hurried off into the dusk, glad of the protecting shadows.

Buzz Turner, room-mate of Bob Delano, had one other claim to distinction and this was that he belonged to the Bartlett College Dramatic Club where he was recognized as a playwright of promise.

“You’re budding, if you’re not nipped in the bud,” President Harry Seymour had told him on one occasion by way of a jest.

But Buzz had seen little humor in this declaration. He took his writing too seriously for that. And as for his being nipped in the bud! Tut! Tut! No play of his was going to be pronounced a frost. Just wait till he finished this present manuscript which he intended to submit for possible selection as the Dramatic Club’s Annual Play! Why, it was going to be worthy of production on Broadway. Might even make him world famous!

“The way this play’s come to me, I really

think I'm being inspired," Buzz told himself as he kept pen to paper, dashing down the dialogue which presented itself, "Here I'm on the third act already and I just started the play last week. Ought to finish by tomorrow!"

Buzz glanced at the clock.

"Say, I'm getting hungry. Wonder what's keeping Bob? He usually . . .!"

A rap sounded on the door. Big Jim Baker, left guard and "next-room-neighbor" stuck his head in.

"Looking for Bob?" deduced Buzz, "He's not back yet. Probably took a stroll with Anne."

"Not tonight," said Big Jim, tersely, "Bob's in the hospital."

Buzz stared unbelievably, dropping his pen.

"What? . . . You're kidding!"

"Not me. Thought you'd heard about it. It's all over town by now."

The aspiring playwright leaped to his feet and pushed back a wild shock of hair.

"Say, I've been buried in this play ever since classes. What happened? Break his leg or something?"

"Hurt his head," responded Big Jim,

"He may have concussion of the brain."

"Great Jehoshaphat! Why didn't somebody tell me?"

"Probably because you've raised such a fuss over being disturbed," jabbed Big Jim, "Nobody wants to risk ruining a masterpiece!"

Buzz's face colored.

"But, my gosh! Anything like this! . . . Where's my hat? . . . How's Bob? . . . Has he been calling for me?"

"He wasn't even conscious when I saw him last," informed Big Jim.

"You don't say!" Buzz was all feeling and sympathy. He was not athletically inclined but anything that Bob did commanded his intense interest. "Oh, I must do something for him! Have his parents been notified? Do you think he's going to . . .? Look out of my way! I'm beating it for the hospital!"

And Buzz was gone, racing down the stairs with a speed which would have done credit to a track star. Big Jim stood staring after him, shaking his head, quizzically.

"There's one of the funniest birds in college," he said to himself, "But danged if his loyalty to Bob isn't darned near pathetic!"

CHAPTER II

ANNE HAS A CALLER

"STRANGE Rusty hasn't dropped around as he promised," said Anne, nervously, almost an hour later, peering from her window across the campus, "Maybe Bob's condition's so serious that he doesn't want to . . ."

"Oh, he's probably forgotten or been detained," reassured Norma, scarcely able to conceal her own uneasiness.

The b-r-r-r-r! of the telephone was startling.

"See! There he is now!" Norma added, relieved.

Anne hastened to the phone.

"Hello?"

"Gentleman in the reception room to see you," came the voice of the matron.

"Thank you, tell him I'll be right down," responded Anne, hanging up the receiver and pausing before the mirror to take a few quick tucks at her hair.

“Hurry back,” pleaded Norma, “I’m just dying to hear how Bob is myself!”

Anne descended the two flights to the small lobby and paused at the foot of the stairs, half expecting that Rusty would be there awaiting her. He usually was when he called. Anne caught her breath. Rusty must have bad news! And having bad news he did not wish to face her except in the semi-private confines of the reception room down the hall. Anne directed hesitant steps toward it, conscious that her heart was acting abnormally. At the doorway she stopped short, crying impulsively.

“Oh, Rusty, how . . .?” and bit her lips, staring.

The figure within the reception room, awaiting her, was not Rusty. As it whirled about to face her she beheld a slender, rather rakishly dressed man of gaunt features—high cheek bones, accentuated by the pinched flesh and dry hollowness around the eyes—a man whose mouth twitched in a wry smile as the red-rimmed eyes took her in from head to foot. In appearance he was about thirty years old, a man, however, prematurely aged.

“Oh! I—I beg your pardon!” said Anne,

retreating a step and pressing fingers to her lips as the stranger advanced quickly toward her, "I was expecting . . .!"

"Don't know me, do you?" jerked a voice, the wry smile persisting.

"Why—why, no . . . I . . .!" Anne looked about her concernedly.

"Well, I'm not so sure I'd have known you, either, if I hadn't had you called down here. You haven't seen me in some years."

The stranger moved closer. Anne shrank back, almost into the hall.

"I—I'm sorry. I don't ever remember having seen you. You—you must be mistaken."

The eyes of the man! They seemed burningly, staringly alive. This person must be out of his mind. Her failure to recognize him brought a harsh chuckle.

"That's good, that is! I'm *Louie!*"

Anne gasped and suppressed a shriek of surprise and horror.

"Louie?" she repeated, incredulously.

"Your 'dear' uncle's only son!" confirmed Louie, mockingly. "Been about seven years since we crossed tracks, hasn't it?"

Anne nodded, dumbly.

"But, I . . . you . . ."

"I get you, cousin. Have to hand it to *you*, though. *You're* not bad to look at. Suppose you've heard that before?"

Anne's face flushed.

"What is it you want?" she demanded.

"Plenty!"

Louie reached out and took her arm persuasively.

"Come in out of the hall."

Anne let him lead her to the davenport just inside the door. She sat on the edge of it. Louie looked down at her.

"The old man sure left you sitting pretty, didn't he?"

"What do you mean?" Anne met his accusing gaze unflinchingly.

"You know what I mean! His favorite niece! His no-account son. You're a wise little girl. 'Dear'-uncled him into leaving his jack to you! Helped him turn against me!"

Anne leaped to her feet.

"That's not so and you know it! Your father'd disowned you two years before your mother died . . . two years before I went to keep house for him. And I pleaded with him

to take you back . . . that day you called on him. As for his leaving me his money . . . he's left me a small allowance . . . the same as he's left you . . . enough to take care of me till I'm through school."

"Bunk! The old man died rich. He didn't have any other close relatives. Who else would get the jack but you?"

"I don't know," answered Anne, "You'll have to ask Mr. Clark Naylor, your father's attorney."

"I saw him yesterday. That guy's a tombstone. Only satisfaction he'd give me was that all the bequests were secret. Said I was getting all that was coming to me."

Anne nodded. "You know as much as I do, then."

"Is that so?" The red-rimmed eyes regarded Anne suspiciously. "That's just what I made this little trip from New York City to find out! . . . And you might as well come clean, cousin, because I'm going to get the inside on this and if I find out you've been stringing me . . .!"

"It's the truth!" insisted Anne.

"I need money!" snapped Louie, fiercely, his mouth twitching, "I'm not so dumb as the old man thought. Figured I wouldn't see through this secret bequest gag. Tried to make me think he was giving his dough to charity. What a laugh! You had him calling you 'his own little girl.' And the reason he specified his bequests were to be kept secret was so he could keep me from finding out what he slipped to you! Isn't that so?"

"No, Louie ! I've told you—NO!" Anne's voice rose to a hysterical pitch.

Louie glanced furtively into the hall.

"Listen, cousin! I've got to have five hundred! . . . Got to have it! . . . And you've got to get it for me—understand? . . . It's just a drop in the bucket of what you got from the old man."

"Louie, please—believe me . . . I haven't that much money to my name!"

Anne clenched her fingers frenziedly.

"What? A pretty little girl like you? Going to college! Living in a swell house like this?" Louie laughed huskily. "Don't kid me! Of course I know you don't carry that

much around in your stocking but you won't have any trouble getting it for me in the morning. I'll call for it later."

Louie made a gesture toward leaving. Anne followed him, pleadingly.

"It's no use. I won't have it. I haven't got it. And if I did I don't see why I should. . . ."

Louie wheeled at the doorway, his eyes burning red coals.

"Oh, you don't! . . . You had nine soft years off the old man . . . and besides he's fixed you for life . . . you think you'd got that if he hadn't turned thumbs down on me? . . . Not a chance! . . . And you're crying over five hundred. Dig it up, cousin, and don't be telling anybody about it, either, if you know what's good for you."

"See, here, Louie—you can't threaten me like that!" protested Anne, desperately, "I haven't the money and that ends it!"

Footsteps sounded down the hall. The severe look vanished from Louie's face. He became instantly a smooth, even-tempered individual in the act of bidding Anne goodbye. Upon this

little scene Rusty Milburn suddenly projected his presence.

"Oh, excuse me!" he started to apologize, on seeing Anne with another, "But Mrs. Hull told me. . . ."

"It's quite all right," assured Anne, never more glad to be welcoming anyone. Then, noticing that Rusty was blocking Louie's way and, moreover, looking at him with frank curiosity, she added, "Mr. Milburn, meet Mr. Corcoran . . . Mr. Corcoran, Mr. Milburn."

The two shook hands, neither evincing much enthusiasm.

"Well, Miss Morgan, I'll be seeing you again," bowed Louie, his words sounding innocent enough to Rusty but carrying an ominous meaning to Anne, "Pleased to have met you, Mr. Milburn."

"Same here," replied Rusty, perfunctorily, and was gone.

And with this Louie slipped from the room.

"Who's that bird?" asked the substitute fullback, exhibiting a trace of jealousy, "Not from Bartlett?"

"No, a—a friend from out of town," Anne answered, weakly, sagging against the door casing.

"Used to go with him?" Rusty made bold to inquire.

"Well—hardly!"

"I wondered," rejoined Rusty, "He hardly looked like quite the type er . . . who . . . well, you know what I mean."

Anne smiled, wanly. Drawing herself up with an effort.

"Tell me about Bob," she urged, obviously eager to learn of his condition as well as to change the subject.

"Much better!" announced Rusty, "I just came from the hospital and the Doc says Bob'll be able to leave tomorrow."

"Oh, I'm so glad. I was afraid he might have been seriously injured," replied Anne, "Did you see him?"

The substitute fullback shook his head.

"No. No one but Buzz saw him and they wouldn't have let him in, either, if he hadn't thrown such a fit that they decided they'd have another patient on their hands if they didn't let him go in."

"Buzz!" exclaimed Anne, "Isn't he the limit?"

Rusty grinned. "Well, they say all great artists are temperamental," he reminded, "And you must remember that Buzz is one of the coming playwrights of this generation!"

"He and his playwrighting!" Anne laughed, "But I like Buzz. And I sympathize with him, too . . . because he seems to feel things so. He told me once he believed he suffered lots more every bump Bob got than Bob did himself."

Rusty nodded. "That's Buzz for you. He looks on football as a necessary evil. Says its being kept alive by the love for physical drama. Oh, well—I don't pretend to understand him."

"Nor I," agreed Anne, amused, "I suppose then, getting back to Bob, that he'll be able to play against Hale Saturday?"

"I doubt it," answered Rusty, "He's still pretty shaken up. Take him a couple days to completely get over the effects."

"Oh, that's too bad. Looks like we'd need him too." Anne caught herself. "But it'll mean that you'll be playing in his place, won't it?"

“Probably,” Rusty affirmed, watching Anne’s face closely, “Tough this thing had to happen. I naturally feel cut up about it. Imagine those guys at the field trying to make out I did it on purpose?”

“Oh, I don’t believe that!” assured Anne.

“I knew you didn’t,” declared Rusty, “But that bunch of beefers made me sore. Somebody always ready to holler ‘foul play’ the second anything goes wrong.”

Anne nodded, sympathetically. “You did perfectly right in paying no attention to them.”

“Oh, by the way,” recalled the substitute fullback, “This is pretty far ahead, I know, but there’s nothing like getting your bid in early. Will you honor me as my partner at the Annual Grid Club Dinner Dance?”

“Why, Rusty, that’s not till after the football season!” protested Anne, surprised.

Rusty smiled. “Sure. But I lost out by not asking you soon enough last year. That’s what comes of trying to date one of the most popular girls in college.”

Anne blushed.

“Thanks, Rusty, lots—for the invitation. I—I never make dates this far ahead, though.

If you'd care to ask me again later . . .?"

The substitute fullback looked his disappointment.

"But no one else has asked you yet?" he persisted.

Anne shook her head. "N-no."

"Well, my bid's in anyway," said Rusty, philosophically. Then, leaning forward and lowering his voice, "Anne, I care a great deal for you. I'd like to go with you steady. Can't we . . .?"

The color mounted again in Anne's cheeks. She met Rusty's eyes with a half-smile.

"Now, Rusty! You'd be tired of me in no time. Let's not. We've been very good friends this way. Why run the risk of spoiling it?"

Rusty laughed, a bit self-consciously. "Well, all right," he agreed, arising, "But I give you fair warning. I'm going to be after you often!"

The substitute fullback squeezed Anne's hand tightly as he took leave.

Returned to her room a white-faced girl was met by her room-mate with an exclamation of concern.

"Why, Anne! You look sick! What's the

matter? What's happened? Bob worse?"

"Oh, no—Bob's better! But I . . . well, I'm just a bit upset. I'll be all right in a minute." Anne sank into a chair.

Norma hurried across the room and filled a glass with water.

"Here, dear, have a drink. You're faint."

Anne took the proffered drink, the glass trembling in her hands.

"Now, what did Rusty say to disturb you like this?" demanded Norma, as Anne set the glass down after a sip.

"Oh, it wasn't Rusty . . . entirely," said Anne, staring fixedly at the wall. Then, as if making up her mind, she turned confidentially toward her chum. "Norma, we've been room-mates for three years but I've never really told you much about myself. I don't suppose you know any more about me than that my parents are dead and that I made a home with my uncle in New York City until he died a year ago."

"That's all," assented Norma, eyeing Anne, wonderingly.

"Well, Uncle Billy Corcoran had a son, Louie, who was always getting into scrapes.

He ran away from home finally and when Uncle found he couldn't do a thing with him, he disinherited him. That was two years before my aunt died and I think it was Louie's behavior, as much as anything, that killed her. Uncle Billy had me come and keep house for him then as I'd been living with a family since my father's death. He was wonderful to me but he said over and over that he didn't intend to spoil me as he had his own son. It was his idea that I should be self-supporting by the time I was twenty-one." Anne smiled. "That only leaves me about a month, doesn't it? And with my twenty-first birthday the allowance he willed me stops."

"My! He did believe in your developing independence, didn't he?" exclaimed Norma.

"I'm glad he did. Uncle Billy said he'd given Louie everything he wanted when he was a boy and Louie hadn't developed any resources of his own. That money was the worst thing in the world for a person if they didn't have the right sense of values. And Louie'd spend any amount given him. That's why he only left us both an allowance, big enough to live on if we lived moderately. Of course he

didn't have to leave Louie a cent. And Louie really shared better than I because his allowance is to last him for life. But Uncle Billy also had the idea a girl ought to be married young . . . so you see, while he's tried to make me economically independent, I'm also given the chance of marriage as a . . . well, way out!"

Norma laughed.

"That's no way out these days. It's just as apt to be a way in deeper. I know lots of girls who're supporting their husbands!"

Anne looked her amusement.

"But I still don't see how all this should be affecting you now," pondered Norma.

Anne's face sobered.

"It is, though. Who do you think was waiting for me downstairs? Not Rusty . . . Louie!"

Norma's eyes widened. "Oh!"

"I hadn't seen him in years," continued Anne, finding a relief in the telling, "He looked terrible! . . . You've no idea . . . sunken eyes . . . sallow complexion . . . and a nervous way of twisting his lips . . . oh, awful! . . ."

"My heavens!" gasped Norma, "Sounds like you're describing a dope addict!"

"He might be. I don't know. He scared me at any rate."

"But what's he doing here in Bartlett?"

"Here to see me. After money!"

"Why, he's crazy!"

"Not exactly. You see Uncle Billy willed that all the bequests he made were to be kept secret. And Louie's got a notion I received a good share of his father's money. That accounts for it."

"But you soon told him differently?"

"I tried to, but he wouldn't believe me. He was desperate. You know how much he wanted?"

Norma shook her head.

"Five hundred dollars!"

"Why! That's outrageous!"

"He said I'd have to get it for him, that he'd be back after it."

"Anne! Why, I'd report a person like that to the police. He's dangerous!"

Anne reached for the glass of water to wet dry lips.

"I—I hardly know what to do. I don't want

to make Louie more angry at me than he is now. And he really hasn't done enough to me to cause him much trouble."

"But he might. You never can tell . . . especially if he's been the sort you say, I wouldn't take any chances, Anne. The police can at least make him let you alone."

Anne considered, nervously.

"N-no. The more I think it over the more I feel Louie was just testing me out. He thought I was lying to him and was trying to see if he could get the truth by threatening me. And when I still insisted I didn't have the money it may have convinced him. Rusty came right then and Louie seemed anxious to get away. I really doubt if he'll cause me any more trouble."

"Just the same," urged Norma, "I'd at least speak to . . . well, Bob about it."

"Bob!" took up Anne, "I should say not! Why should I burden him or anyone else with my affairs?"

"I suppose that would be kind of foolish," reconsidered Norma, "Good gracious! Don't know whether I'll be able to sleep nights after this or not?"

CHAPTER III

BUZZ FINISHES HIS MASTERPIECE

“WELCOME home, Bob, old man! Gee, it seems like you’d been all the way over to Europe! Have you really been gone only since yesterday? Impossible! I laid awake three nights worrying about you.”

Thus did Buzz Turner, room-mate of the star fullback greet his return late Thursday afternoon.

“Yes, sir, Buzz, old sock, the bouncing boy is back again,” replied Bob, slapping the aspiring playwright a resounding crack between the shoulder blades, “Ye gods! I almost got snow blindness from looking at white walls and those long white corridors with rows on rows of white beds! My eyes blurred so I could hardly find my way home!”

“Yeah?” grinned Buzz, “I was afraid you’d never come home with all those pretty nurses waiting on you. That’s the only time I’ve ever envied a football player. But right then I

wished I was you with an eye winker in my eye and a dozen of those baby dolls crowding around, trying to get it out. As it is I'm just a poor darn fool who thinks he can write a play. And girls steer as clear of me as they do of poison ivy. But wait! When I become famous . . .! No kidding, Bob . . . how do you feel? Would you like to lie down? Shall I get you a pillow? What can your man nurse get for you?"

Buzz struck a pose, registering the utmost attentiveness. Bob dropped in the big arm chair by the window which looked directly across the campus at Hadden Dormitory.

"I'm all right, thanks," reassured Bob, "sort of shaky yet, though. That was a terrific wallop I got. I'm sore clear down my spine, but the Doc says, if I take it easy the next few days, it'll pass off."

"What—your spine?"

The star fullback grinned.

"The court jester at work again!" he chided, gently, "Buzz, you're worth your weight in applesauce!"

"Thanks," acknowledged Buzz, "I might as well play the part. Folks expect it of me.

Every time I say anything someone remarks, 'Clever line!' when I hadn't intended it to be clever at all. And then someone else pipes up with, 'Oh, he's full of clever lines. He ought to be—think of the dialogue he writes in his plays!' . . . It's really very annoying!"

"But you like it!" charged Bob, knowingly.

"I have to," hedged Buzz, "And speaking of plays—you arrived back just in time to get in on the finish of my masterpiece!"

The star fullback groaned.

"Ow! Then I'm due for a relapse!"

"Now, is that nice?" reproved Buzz, "One of these days you'll be patting yourself on the chest and telling the world, 'Yes, sir, I used to room with that guy Turner but I didn't really appreciate him then for what he was. And now look at him—a second Shaw or Ibsen!'"

Bob waved a disparaging hand.

"A second Buffalo Bill. Only thing I can see you staging is something wild."

"Say, if this play's produced it'll make a terrific hit!"

"You mean you'll *get* hit!" taunted Bob, good-naturedly, "Buzz, old play factory, if dreams were clouds you'd be in 'em all the

time. Let's see, what is this—the seventh play you've written since you've been in college?"

Buzz nodded.

"And nothing ever came of any of 'em. Isn't there any limit to your endurance?"

"Oh, this play was easy," explained Buzz, "You see I've worked the best parts of all my other plays into it. Of course the plot's entirely different but my characterizations and atmosphere . . .!"

"What's the title of your play, 'Hash'?"

"Naw!" denied Buzz, scornfully. "It's a pippin'!"

"Nope," considered Bob, gravely, "I don't care for it."

"Hey, it's the title that's a pippin', you dumb-bell!"

"Yes, I like 'You Dumb-bell' better," approved Bob, preparing to dodge anything the aspiring playwright might lay his hands on. Buzz laid hold of a paper weight.

"Go on, I dare you!" he challenged, "Make another bright crack!"

The star fullback grinned. "Come on with that title," he demanded, "Or I'll tear that

masterpiece up and sock it in the waste basket!"

"The title," reiterated Buzz, with enthusiasm, "Is 'Money to Burn'!"

"'Money to Burn,' eh?" repeated Bob. "H-m-m-m! . . . Pretty good at that. Arouses interest right off. I'd like a little to burn myself."

"And just maybe I wouldn't?" seconded Buzz. "I'm going into politics one of these days and put through a nineteenth amendment doing away with the first of the month."

"Now there's a cause to devote your life to," commended Bob, "Something you're fitted for. I suggest you chuck playwrighting and . . ."

"Listen!" begged Buzz, "I've kept you in mind all the time I was writing this play and I've created a marvelous part for you . . .!"

"For me?" Bob sat upright.

"Yes—you," declared the playwright, "And not meaning to flatter you, I may as well remark that I consider you the best straight juvenile in college!"

The star fullback's eyes opened wider. He bowed mockingly. "Oh, really?"

“Good gosh, man, I’m serious! You see, being your room-mate, I felt that I knew you well enough to build a character showing your good points as well as er . . . your faults.”

Bob registered horror. “Oh, Cæsar’s apparition!”

“And, boy, the part’s actor proof. All you’ve got to do is act natural!”

Bob leaned forward.

“Go on! I’m going to sue you. But, go on!”

“Sue me? Wait till I tell you who I’ve in mind to play the ingenue—the female lead opposite you.”

“All right—spill it!”

“Anne Morgan,” announced Buzz, watching his room-mate closely, “Suit you?”

The star fullback’s face flushed.

“Not so bad,” he agreed, grinning, “Say—what you doing—kidding me?”

“Not me! Why, say—I’ve even worked in a swell love scene where you kiss her a couple times. I guess that won’t be hard to take!”

Bob jumped up and reached for the manuscript.

“Let me see! Where?”

“Here, let me read you the scene,” volun-

teered Buzz, "It's just after you've rescued her from Jacques Brugnon, the villain . . ."

"A Frenchman!" exclaimed Bob, interestedly.

"Sure. The locale of the play's in France! That's where the Americans are burning up most of their money now-a-days! Didn't I see 'em throwing away plenty when I worked my way across last summer? These show-off Americans are a bunch of darn fools and my play brings out that it's these kind of Americans who are causing most of the ill-feeling abroad. Why, I saw an American in Paris, stewed to the eyebrows, who set fire to a ten franc note and gave a Frenchman a light! Money to burn! . . . Is it any wonder the French are sore? Is it any wonder they soak these crass Americans fancy prices?"

"Say—what's this—an oration?"

"Naw, that's just the theme of the play."

"You've certainly tackled a big and timely subject," admitted Bob. "But what's this you were saying about playing Anne opposite me? What is this—a frame-up?"

"I should say not. She's a corking actress and she fits the part perfectly with her

dark hair and sparkling dark eyes . . .”

“Boy, you’re an author all right. Rave on!”

“. . . she’s just the type to play Pauline Tochard, the petite mademoiselle you’re in love with!” finished Buzz.

“Read that scene!” commanded Bob.

The aspiring playwright consulted his manuscript, found the specified scene, and cleared his throat preparatory to waxing dramatic.

“The setting is the private parlor-office of the Tout Va Bien Hotel on the West Bank—Latin Quarter—of Paris,” he informed, “I won’t take time to go into the plot now except to tell you that you’re one of the *decent* Americans.”

“Thanks for that much anyhow,” rejoined Bob, dryly.

“But, because of the actions of other cheap, ill-mannered Americans at the hotel, you’re classed with them,” Buzz continued.

“Not so good,” observed Bob, registering concern.

“Oh, I clear everything up before it’s all over,” promised Buzz.

“What the deuce am I doing in France in the first place?” demanded Bob.

“My gosh! Haven’t I told you? You’ve

been over to France with the A.E.F. and billeted in the hotel where you met Pauline, the daughter of Proprietor Rene Tochard. You fell for her then and now you've come back, three years later, to take a post-graduate course in architecture at the Sorbonne . . ."

"You mean that's what I'm supposed to be taking but I've really come back to see her?" divined the prospective leading man.

"Well, of course . . ." admitted Buzz, "Now Pauline believes in you and so does her brother, Henri, but her father thinks you're a 'no good American' and so does Jacques Brugnon who's been trying to get Pauline to marry him ever since the Armistice. By trickery he gets you in bad with the French people and your life is threatened in a scene I'll bet'll bring the house down!"

"Great! A mob scene, eh? A regular football rush! I'm in training for that!"

"Be yourself! . . . It's after this smashing scene, when you're left alone for a moment with Pauline, that you say . . ." And here Buzz commenced reading from the bulky script. "'Pauline, you would go against your own father—for me?' And she says, 'Oui, Donald

. . . you were right, Papa wrong. What else can I do?' . . . And you say, 'I love you, Pauline! . . .' Here's where you take her hand. 'I've always loved you, ever since that first day we met . . . that day you called me your Yankee! It was the war then, Pauline . . . a girl would say things then she might never say again . . . but I've always hoped . . . Pauline, ma petite! . . . Let me take you back to America with me . . . the America I love . . . the true America . . . let me take back a breath of France . . . to show my people how fine and sweet and genuine the real French people are.' And then you take her in your arms and you say, 'Marry me, ma cherie! To-day!' . . . and Pauline cries, 'Oh, Donald, my Yankee! . . . My American!' . . . and you kiss her, once, twice, three times . . . as the curtain falls!"

Buzz, finishing the reading, glanced up for the verdict.

"Some finish!" complimented Bob, "But you'll never get Anne to take that part opposite me!"

"Say, I'd like to see her refuse if the Dra-

matic Club should choose 'Money to Burn' as the play of the year! Why, she'd jump at the chance. Any girl in Bartlett would. Think of the honor, man! Think of the honor!"

"Yes . . . and think of the *kisses!*" reminded Bob.

"Not enough, eh?" guessed Buzz, "Well, I can easily put in a couple more!"

"Hey! . . . Stop right where you are!" warned the star fullback, "or I'll throw you back behind your own goal line!"

A rap at the door saved the playwright. It was really more than a rap—a hammer-like blow.

"There's that old panel-buster again," complained Buzz, "Come in, Jim!"

"Howdy, fellers!"

Big Jim Baker's two hundred and forty pounds stood in the doorway.

"Well, if it isn't Hard Knuckles!" greeted Bob. "Whither bound, little boy? Whither bound?"

"Signal practice," announced Jim, grinning, "You coming?"

The star fullback shook his head. "Rusty's working out in my place tonight."

“That so? Then you’re not playing Saturday?”

Bob shrugged his shoulders. “I’m not starting at any rate.”

The left guard glanced about cautiously.

“You know something?” he said, in a low voice, “Just between us, some of the boys have doped it out that Rusty bumped you on purpose!”

Buzz pushed aside his manuscript, inquiringly.

“What’s that?”

“I say,” repeated Big Jim, “there’s a little talk about Rusty playing a dirty game. Everyone knows he’s been peeved because Bob beat him out this year. He made the crack to Matt just before the Eckland game that he wasn’t wishing Bob any hard luck but it looked like Bob would have to get laid up before Coach would give him a chance.”

“Nothing at all to it,” discredited the star fullback, “Rusty’s always been nice enough to me.”

“To your face, yes,” admitted Big Jim, “But I’m tipping you off, Bob old man—look

out for that guy. He's not losing any love on you. Not when you've got the place he wants on the team . . . and also the girl!"

"Now there's a drama for you!" perceived Buzz, making a grab for a piece of note paper.

"Great stray cats!" swore Big Jim, "The drama fiend! Doesn't he ever let up?"

"That guy?" razzed Bob, "He's hopeless!"

"I've got a great play!" announced Buzz, unruffled.

"Keep it," ordered Big Jim. Then, more charitably, "Got a good part in her for me?"

"Three good parts," informed Buzz, eyes twinkling.

"That's fine. I've always wanted to be a ham actor."

"Not a ham actor," protested Bob. "Do you know what a ham actor is?"

"Sure!" replied the applicant, with perfect gullibility. "Ham's short for Hamlet."

Bob groaned. "It's no use. You'd better stick to football."

But the chunky left guard was not easily dissuaded.

"Of course, at first glance, you might say

my size was against me," he explained to the grinning playwright, "But you'd be surprised how thin I can make-up!"

"Oh, I wouldn't want you to make up thin!" objected Buzz. "You're to furnish background in the mob scene and the more people you can look like—the better!"

Big Jim looked his indignation.

"So that's what you think of my stage presence, is it? I want you to know, young man, that I'm an actor of no mean ability! Why, I played the lion in 'Androcles and the Lion' and the bloodhound in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' . . ."

"And the elephant in Ringling Brothers' Circus," finished Buzz. "Yes, I don't doubt that!"

"Suffering murder!" exploded Big Jim, turning to Bob appealingly. "I ask you—how do you live with that guy?"

"It's not a question of 'how' but 'why' do I?" retorted the star fullback.

"Well, if it was me I'd go bughouse!" declared Bartlett's husky left guard. "So long, you guys. I'm going to rehearse football plays. Of course the quarterback has the only real speaking part but they've given me part

of one line and horses and oxen! What I get out of it!"

"The jolliest tub of lard that ever walked," Bob said of him after he was gone. Then, staring out across the campus toward the window of Anne's room, he mused quietly to himself, "Jim's the third bird to tell me that Rusty has it in for me. I wonder if there's really anything to it?"

CHAPTER IV

EVENTS COMMENCE TO SIMMER

A SOBER Bartlett on Saturday, the day of the game with the strong Hale eleven, contemplated the chances of its football team without the services of its brilliant triple threat player. Papers had announced Bob Delano as definitely out of the contest and for the first time during the season close followers of the eleven were unwilling to prophesy victory. Without Delano the team was the equal of past Bartlett elevens; with Delano it took on that inspired something which lifted it to new and previously unattained heights. No one, for instance, would have thought that Bartlett could defeat the Harvesters, champions of the Missouri Valley Conference, 31 to 3. But then again, no one had dreamed that even Bob Delano could puncture the heavy Harvesters' line and slip around the fast Harvesters' ends for four touchdowns! Nor had the football public imagined that Bob could make a rout of

the outstanding team in the Big Ten. And yet he had reeled off dashes of fifty-five and seventy yards in the first four minutes of play, both runs ending in touchdowns. A disheartening beginning for a team rated as Bartlett's equal, which perhaps accounted for its being swamped by the score of 27 to 0.

"Stop Delano!" went out the frenzied cry and colleges had taken it up and echoed it whose teams were yet to meet the devastating tornado.

But the surest way to stop Delano was for him not to play at all and the Hale University football squad, reinforced by five hundred ardent supporters, arrived in Bartlett buoyed up by wild hopes of victory.

To have a chance at a mythical national championship, Bartlett—at mid-season in its most strenuous schedule on record—must not have as much as a tie or a defeat chalked against her. Coach Bruce Edwards, in anticipating the possibility of Bartlett's present material being molded into one of the country's most powerful elevens, had planned ahead in the selection of certain outstanding sectional opponents, the conquering of which might give

Bartlett the distinction sought after. Thus far the wisdom of his schedule making had proven perfect. He had properly gauged the probable merits of teams chosen as opponents, based on a study of their past season's record and the material available for the present season's play. And the consequence was that Bartlett, already having triumphed over previously undefeated elevens, had attained national recognition.

"Small College Has Big Team!" one newspaper put it, and the 'big' referred not to size but to power. Most of the publicity given Bartlett, however, centered upon the galloping Bob Delano, proclaimed by his performance against the Big Ten Champions and the Harvesters as the country's greatest fullback. Sport writers characterized him as next to unstoppable—a bewildering meteor in action—a wild man in an open field, a sure-footed kicker and a rifle-armed forward passer. "The only thing Bob Delano can't do well is stay in one spot," said one wit, to which all members of opposing teams were willing to testify.

"You see, Norma," said Anne, as they prepared to leave for the game, "Louie hasn't

been back after the money he demanded which proves he was just putting up a bluff. I'd have only caused needless trouble by getting excited about it and reporting him to the police."

Norma nodded. "Well, I suppose you're right but from what you told me of the man you had me worried. My, there's lots of Hale rooters on the streets! And aren't they cocky? . . . Something tells me we'll need Bob today and need him badly!"

Rusty Milburn, substitute fullback, was in particularly good humor as he slipped into his football togs. Today, at last, was to be his day. And while the realization that he had been nominated to start the game in place of Bob Delano brought a tingling sort of nervousness, he was, nevertheless, looking forward to his golden opportunity with high expectation.

"I'll show some of these hard heads that Delano isn't the only guy who can play flashy football," Rusty had told Crutch Edgecombe, right tackle, and his room-mate.

"More power to you!" encouraged Crutch, "I think, myself, that Bob's one of the most over-rated players in the country. True enough,

he gets away a lot for long gains but who deserves the credit for that? The line! And what we've done for Bob we can do just as easy for you. So go in there and tear loose!"

"Leave it to me!" promised Rusty. "I haven't waited for this chance all year for nothing!"

The star fullback, though not playing, reported at the clubhouse and got into uniform. The appearance of his blue-jerseyed form with the familiar numerals "44" on the back as he jogged slowly to the bench, brought all in the Bartlett stands to their feet with a mighty roar.

"Yea, Delano! Yea! Yea!" they boomed, and followed with a low muttering murmur of disappointment that the famous "44" was not to be seen in action.

Rusty Milburn, taking the field in Bob's place with the din ringing in his ears, could not but be impressed with the colossal nature of his task. He would have to go some to cause the crowd to forget its idol for so much as one instant. And every play he made would be compared with Bob's. That was the devilish part about playing second fiddle to a fel-

low who had made a name for himself . . . or whose name had been made for him by a fast-charging line and hard-blocking interference.

A divining spectator pretty thoroughly analyzed the substitute fullback's reactions when he was heard to remark, "Rusty must be feeling like subbing for Horatius at the bridge!" The declaration brought a laugh and the word was passed along until the stands were made amusedly aware of it.

"All right, Horatius!" cried a wiseacre. "We're counting on you to turn back the enemy."

". . . to smash through the rain and *Hale!*" punned another rooter.

But such banter gave way at once to an anxious tenseness as Bartlett kicked off to the visitors and Tiny Eddy, Hale quarterback, brought the ball back twenty-five yards on a dodging, twisting run to Hale's forty-yard mark. The first play from scrimmage netted fifteen yards on a sweeping end run and the Hale supporters went wild. Pepped up by this initial success, the Hale eleven rose beyond its own normal power. Gaining five, ten, fif-

teen yards at a clip the team moved deep into Bartlett territory with Coach Edwards' much-vaunted aggregation seemingly deaf to the pleas of "Hold 'em!" which came rocketing from the throats of frenzied followers.

"It looks like they're going to score!" cried Anne, shielding her eyes against the sun which shone at an angle over the top of the Bartlett bowl from the other side of the field.

"Our fellows haven't found their stride yet," said Norma. "Looks to me like they're awfully off form . . . I told you . . . !"

"Now, none of your predictions!" warned Anne, then leaped to her feet involuntarily. "Oh, good work, Rusty! What a marvelous tackle! You see it?"

"No," admitted Norma, "I was watching that girl in that green sport hat. Isn't it a beauty?"

But Anne's eyes could not be tempted from the gridiron. A fighting Hale team—fighting to upset the dope—was that moment in possession of a first down on Bartlett's six yard line!

"Hold 'em!" begged the home hopes.

“Touchdown, Hale! Touchdown!” screamed the visitors.

With nine minutes of the first quarter gone the veteran Bartlett line braced in an effort to withstand Hale’s last desperate onslaught. For a few breathless instants it seemed as though the increased resistance offered would be able to stem Hale’s great advance at the very goal line. But, with the ball one foot from the line, last down and the goal to make—Tiny Eddy was sent hurtling over the Bartlett forward wall for the much coveted touchdown and the five hundred rooters from Hale University multiplied themselves by ten times in sound. Another terrific outburst followed almost immediately as Tiny toed his team into a seven point lead by place-kicking the point after touchdown, thus establishing himself as an individual hero, come whatever else that might!

Bartlett’s star fullback, sitting crouched over, elbows on knees, chin resting on knuckles, viewed proceedings from the end of the bench, glumly. A row of substitutes stole curious and rather awesome glances at him.

"Bet you wish you were in there," ventured Jerry, the water boy, giving expression to that which was obvious.

But Bartlett's probable All-American star gave no indication that he had even heard the remark. Hale was kicking off now and his team would have the ball for the first time. What would they be able to do with it on the offensive without him in the line-up? And what would the fellow who was playing in his place be able to do? Coach Edwards, at the further end of the bench, was grimly entertaining the same questions and waiting impatiently for their answer.

Ed Raymond, left half, caught the pigskin on his twelve yard line and fell in behind a quickly forming interference. But the Hale men were down fast with the kick and diving at him. He evaded half a dozen would-be tacklers by skirting toward the sidelines but was run out of bounds after traveling eleven yards to Bartlett's twenty-three yard mark.

"Yea, Raymond!" roared Bartlett and settled back to watch their football machine in action.

Smack! The ball went to Delano's suc-

cessor on the first play and he was through the line, Big Jim Baker opening a hole. Two yards! Good enough. Now Stew Anderson, right half, trying the Hale left end. A "Yea!" from the Hale stands. Anderson thrown for a yard loss. Third down and nine to go. Not so good.

"Get started, you guys!" begged a fan.

Ball to Rusty again. Quarterback Matt Chapin pounding it against his stomach as he lunged past. Another hole opened up by Big Jim Baker. Five yards gain!

"Yea, Rusty!"

But Matt was calling kick formation. Rusty dropped back to punt and got away a fair kick, being hurried by fast Hale ends who leaped up in an attempt to block and fell to earth finger tips short of touching the leather. Hale's ball downed on her thirty-one yard line. Whistle! End of first quarter.

Hale, 7; Bartlett, 0!

Eyes turned anxiously to the scoreboard. Hale had played smart, snappy football all through the quarter, serving notice that they would be one of the hardest customers thus far to defeat. Bartlett's opening offensive had

been effectively smothered. But the game, thank fortune, was still young.

With hostilities resumed on changing ends of the gridiron, the Bartlett defense improved, forcing Hale to punt at midfield.

"Now get that touchdown back!" the Bartlett stands commenced intreating at once.

And Bartlett started out to do that little thing with a pretty, varied attack.

"They're using Rusty about every other play!" announced Norma as she watched for his number "56," "He's working in nicely, too . . . not making such long gains but . . . there he goes! See! . . ."

"About six yards!" judged Anne, "and another first down for us! On Hale's twenty-nine yard line!"

The visiting team's defense stiffened here and Bartlett suddenly met a stone wall. Two end runs gained little more than two yards. Quarterback Chapin called for a forward pass, Rusty doing the throwing.

"Get the ball to Slim out on right end, if you can!" Matt shouted in Rusty's ear. "He's been getting in the open out there about every play."

The substitute fullback nodded. He had been working like an iron horse and he panted for breath as he reached out his hands for the ball. It snapped back and the Bartlett line strained, wavered and broke. Rusty feinted a run with the ball, striding off to the side, hugging the pigskin. Then he raised up, eyes seeking Slim Tyler. There he was—as Matt had anticipated—in the clear! Rusty drew back his arm and hurled the pigskin. A mad shout, then a shrieking groan. His throw had gone wild and, worse luck! the ball had been intercepted. The Hale left end, racing in, had jumped and caught the pigskin as it sailed over Slim's head, setting out—in the same motion—for the Bartlett goal. Hale rooters, delirious with joy, took note that the interceptor of Bartlett's pass had what appeared to be a clear path down the field. He was already far to the side and any Bartlett player, to overtake him, would have to catch him from behind.

The substitute fullback, choking with disappointment, had the thought seared upon his consciousness that if another touchdown resulted, this through a fault of his, it would be a something he could never live down and give

to Hale a lead which might prove insurmountable. Hardly knowing what he was doing he took out after the flying Hale end with a grimness born of rage and despair. His efforts soon carried him far in the lead of other desperate fellow players who had given chase, his long legs eating up distance over the trampled sod. The gap, at first some twenty yards, now lessened to fifteen . . . twelve . . . ten . . . eight . . . and stayed at eight as the two struggled on across chalk mark after chalk mark . . . until the Bartlett goal post commenced bobbing crazily in front of them. Then Rusty called upon a reserve force he didn't know he had and closed the remaining eight yard gap in a couple of lunging strides. But the Hale end was crossing the five yard line now with the crowd all but black in the face from yelling and the terrific excitement of the moment. As Rusty left his feet for a diving tackle the Bartlett crowd figuratively left with him and many instinctively fell forward, grabbing those in front of them.

"He got him!" shouted Anne, thumping Norma on the back. "Oh, that was great!"

"And there's the whistle!" cried Norma,

frenziedly. "First half's over! What a narrow escape!"

The Hale end had been brought to earth but three scant yards from the Bartlett goal and Rusty had, in part, redeemed himself for his wild forward pass which had come so close to spelling disaster.

"Good boy, Rusty!" Bob yelled out to him as the substitute fullback was lifted to his feet and helped toward the Bartlett bench amid a great ovation.

Coach Edwards had plenty to say to his men between halves and a fighting Bartlett team returned to the field, resolved to batter its way to the front at all costs. It just simply had to be done, that was all. Done for Bob's sake if none other. The star fullback had been largely responsible for Bartlett's undefeated record up to this point. Was the team going to throw Bob down after all his great work? And was the one glorious chance for a possible national championship to be lost through succumbing to a Hale eleven made doubly strong by Bob's absence from the line-up?

"Win for Bob!" became the grim-voiced slogan, the driving spirit of Bartlett's triple

threat man reflected in the unleashing of a furious offensive. Hale resisted stubbornly, clinging desperately to a one-touchdown lead which now began to loom as a Gibraltar.

Wild shrieks as Rusty Milburn, substitute fullback, got away for a dazzling run of eighteen yards to carry the ball to Hale's ten yard mark.

"He's tearing pages from Bob's notebook!" laughed a spectator. "Yea, Rusty!"

With the goal to make the Hale line set itself to stand off the determined Bartlett offensive. Ed Raymond was stopped in less than a yard on an attempted end run. Stew Anderson gained only two on a pretty criss-cross behind the line which looked momentarily as though it was going to produce the much-desired touchdown.

"Third down and eight to go!" announced the referee.

"Give it to Rusty!" cried a fan.

And the substitute fullback, grinning crazily as he reeled in his position, felt a wave of satisfaction as his number was called. One of Bob's favorite plays, a fake end run and a sudden cut in through left guard, Big Jim Baker

opening the hole! This time the play worked beautifully without the Bartlett star. Rusty shot through the hole, leaped the sprawling body of Big Jim and drove to Hale's one yard line where he was buried beneath tacklers.

"Yea, Rusty!" boomed the stands.

And the fellow who was subbing for the mighty Bob Delano gloried in it. He'd make 'em cheer. It was just as his roomie, Crutch Edgecombe had said—the line had been doing half Bob's work and not getting proper credit for it. Well, the line probably wouldn't get any more credit for helping *him* get through, either. Which meant that he—Rusty Milburn—would be raved about if he could tie up the game and then go out and score another touch-down to put it on ice.

"Great work, Rusty!" shouted Quarterback Chapin, pounding him on the back. "Here's where we take her over!"

"Hold 'em, Hale!" begged the five hundred supporters, now not so certain of victory.

On the Bartlett bench fellow substitutes shifted feet and arms nervously. Some called words of encouragement which were immediately lost in the turmoil. The star fullback

kept pace with his nerves by smacking the palm of one hand with the fist of the other. Bartlett had come close to scoring in the first half only to flounder but she could not afford to fall short again. This last down must carry the ball across. And quarterback Chapin, after a second's hesitation, during which he shrewdly studied the Hale line, selected the play he thought would turn the trick.

"Signals over!" cried Rusty at once.

Matt Chapin looked around, surprised.

"Signals!" he insisted, and called the same play despite the substitute fullback's objection.

The ball snapped back to Matt who faked a pass to Rusty, then shot close around the end while Rusty, plunging into the line, was stopped by a human wall. A terrific cheer went up. Matt was over. Touchdown for Bartlett!

"Atta way, gang!" yelled Bob, as tickled as though he himself had made the score. "Come on, Rusty! Tie her up, old man, with a little place kick!"

But the substitute fullback was sore about something. It could be seen from the stands. He and quarterback Chapin were exchanging

words as the two teams lined up for the attempted point after touchdown.

"You've got a lot to beef about, you have!" team-mates heard Matt shoot at Rusty. "Been calling on you darn near every other play!"

"Yes and when it comes right down to the goal line you slip the ball to yourself and sneak across!" charged Rusty. "I do the biggest part of the work and you try to hog the credit! Not that I expect so much but . . ."

"Say!" Matt cut short, "are you for the team or for yourself?"

"Play ball!" ordered the referee, pushing the players from one another.

In kick formation Matt dropped back to up-end the ball for the irate Rusty's toe.

"Make it good!" he called, as the linesmen dug their toes into the sod. "We need this point!"

"He'll make it!" declared Anne, confidently. "Great game, isn't it, Norma?"

"It's greater than it was," admitted her room-mate, with a glance toward the scoreboard.

The substitute fullback, nerves on edge due

to ill-feeling, swung his toe against the pigskin as quarterback Chapin caught and held it in position. But the kick was off and the ball skimmed to the side as the Hale stands came to their feet in a state of delirium. Their eleven was still in the lead!

“Good grief!” groaned a Bartlett fan, “that miss may cost us the game!”

Chagrined at his failure to kick goal which reflected directly upon him, Rusty continued his upbraiding of quarterback Chapin.

“You didn’t hold that ball right!” he complained. “How do you think I could kick straight when you . . .?”

Big Jim Baker caught Rusty by the arm.

“Lay off that stuff, you hear? . . . We got no time for bellyaching! Got to do this little job all over again. Come on, fellers!”

Team-mates hurried down the field to line up for kick-off to Hale. A grumbling substitute fullback followed. Anne and Norma in the stands were two of many who looked on wonderingly, unable to puzzle the little personal incident out. Bob shook his head deplorably and exchanged a consulting glance with the coach. Things weren’t breaking any

too well. Team members seemed to have been affected by the wrangle, whatever it was, and they were crowding about quarterback Chapin as he trotted down the field, plying him with questions.

“Forget it, you guys!” commanded Matt, taking his cue from Big Jim, self-appointed peace maker.

The third quarter was more than half over. And the question was, could Bartlett repeat her drive or had she shot her bolt in that one inspired advance? It was certain that Bartlett would encounter an even more aroused Hale, striving to hold its one-point advantage.

The visitors, taking the kick-off, smashed through for two first downs in three plays with their supporters howling defiance at Bartlett.

“Nothing to it!” raved one fan. “Who said Bartlett had a football team?”

But these words were scarcely out of his mouth than a fumble gave the ball to Bartlett and stopped what had given promise of being a scoring offensive.

“All right, gang!” shouted Bob, making a megaphone of his hands. “Open up! Let’s see something!”

With the ball on Hale's thirty-three-yard line and four minutes of the third quarter remaining, Bartlett's undefeated warriors threw themselves furiously at the enemy. A blazing-eyed Rusty Milburn tore around the right end, behind splendid interference, for eight yards. On crawling to his feet after being downed he shook his finger vindictively at quarterback Chapin. He was the Bob Delano of today. Not so spectacular, perhaps, yet he had proved Bartlett's most consistent ground-gainer. Nobody could get around that. And if he could break away for a winning touchdown . . . !

Groans from a hopeful Bartlett crowd as the Hale line broke through and dropped quarterback Chapin for a six-yard loss on a poor pass back from center.

"Time out!"

Matt was injured on the play. He limped about, testing his ankle, but he was actually more concerned with the break in the game than with his injury. Bartlett's ball on Hale's thirty-one-yard line. Third down and eight yards to go. The boys were tiring. If the ball went over, as it appeared it would, Hale would

undoubtedly throw up a terrific defense in the last quarter. Make no mistake—that Hale line was tough! Matt glanced toward the sidelines. Oh, for Bob Delano in a situation such as this! A field goal could do it or a forward pass or one of his dazzling open field runs. Bartlett might never get in such good scoring position again.

As if divining quarterback Chapin's thoughts, Coach Edwards was seen to get up from the bench and hurry along to where the star fullback was sitting. They conversed together quickly. Bob nodded and pulled at his sweater. The coach helped him jerk it off . . . and, an instant later the Bartlett stands went wildly insane while the Hale contingent sat dumb with astonishment, at the appearance of number "44" on the field!

"It's a put-up job!" protested a Hale rooter. "They intended to use him right along!"

The substitute fullback, seeing Bob on his way out to join the team, turned inquiringly to Matt and yelled in the quarterback's ear to make himself heard above one of the greatest uproars ever let loose in the Bartlett bowl.

“Who’s place he taking?”

Matt touched Rusty significantly. “Yours!”

“*What?*”

The star fullback reported to the referee, motioning toward the fellow who had substituted for him. Rusty left the field, head down, hands clenched, crying and raging by turns, ignoring Bob’s well-meant slap on the back. Even the fact that he was given a mighty cheer in appreciation of his fine performance, provided no consolation. He was being removed unjustly. If anyone had ever earned his spurs . . . ! Of course he hadn’t made good on the one forward pass he had tried, or the goal kick . . . but the best players in the country couldn’t register one hundred per cent. And his ground-gaining had put the ball in position for scoring every time.

“They’re pulling me without giving me a chance to really show what I can do!” Rusty sobbed, angrily. “Making it look like I can’t come through! Setting the stage for Bob! Fine stuff, that is! Kind of deal I’ve been getting right along!”

The substitute fullback slumped down on the bench and jerked a blanket over his head, car-

ing not so much as to see what might take place upon the field.

But all other eyes within seeing distance were opened wide and staring. The great Bob Delano was in the game! Look out for fireworks now! Anything might happen!

CHAPTER V

BITTER ACCUSATIONS

THE effect upon the Hale eleven of the Bartlett star's injection in the contest was equivalent to that of plunging eleven men in paralyzingly cold water. All eleven would rather have been saved from the experience. Hale could do without Bob Delano very well even though Bartlett apparently could not. And it was a tribute to the Hale team's power that Bartlett had considered it necessary to drag her injured star from the bench in an effort to stave off possible defeat. The question, however, which particularly worried Hale, was just how much said Delano was hurt. If he had hobbled out on the field after throwing aside crutches, they would have felt more disposed to welcome him. But even then, unless he carried his right arm in a sling, Bartlett's triple threat man would have been dangerous enough. As it was, there was not the slightest bandage or outward sign to show that he had been injured at all

And Hale was led to wonder just a bit if, in the language of Mark Twain, the accounts of the star fullback's injuries hadn't been greatly exaggerated.

"There he goes!" shrieked the stands as the ball snapped back to number "44." "An end run!"

Only it wasn't. A carefully veiled pass instead . . . with Bob Delano running crouched, ball at pit of stomach . . . then straightened suddenly, off to one side, and whipping the pigskin with an overhand motion much as one would hurl a baseball, on a whizzing line to Slim Tyler who clutched it as though he were seizing a United States money bag. An avalanche of Hale men hit him the next instant but the forward pass had netted Bartlett twelve yards and a first down.

"Oh, wonderful!" exclaimed Norma. "After all, there's only one Bob!"

"Yes, but I feel awfully sorry for Rusty," replied Anne. "I think any fellow's unfortunate who tries out for a position that's occupied by a player like Bob. Why, if our backfield hadn't been such high calibre this year, Rusty would have been a regular easily!"

With a first down on Hale's nineteen yard line, quarterback Chapin tried Ed Raymond around right end. Two yards. Then Stew Anderson around left end. Two more yards. Both times using Bob as the decoy. Hale was watching the Bartlett star like a hawk, the referee being forced to caution the opposing players against roughing him. But Hale was determined to prevent Bartlett from scoring, if they had to stop a team of Delanos.

“Look out for a pass!”

The cry rang out with the ball once more going to Bob on what appeared to be a reverse of the previous play. The deception of this formation was that Delano had been known to run with the ball as often as he had thrown it and, as he passed on the run it was difficult either to tackle him or block the throw. This time he tricked Hale into covering up frantically, then feinted a throw to left end Morrison only to whirl suddenly and make a long heave to Slim Tyler who had crossed the Hale goal line unnoticed, yards away. The toss again was unerring, the pigskin settling into Slim's arms with nothing remaining for him to do but fall with it to the ground. This Slim

promptly did, several Hale men landing atop him with the field a confusion of sound and color. And, as Bob added the extra point on a perfectly placed drop kick, the din became terrific. It continued as the scoreboard was changed to read:

Bartlett, 13; Hale, 7.

The third quarter ended there and so did Bob Delano's stay in the game. Coach Edwards took him out at once in favor of Stub Russell, utility backfield man and as number "44" trotted off the field to the bench he received Bartlett's famous tribute, all in the bowl standing—bareheaded—a tribute in which the Hale supporters, good sportsmen that they were, joined. But, while Hale was forced to take "hats off" to Bob, there was no slackening of resistance during the last quarter. Bartlett's staunch opponents took the offensive and held it up to the final whistle, fighting valiantly for a cause which they now knew to have been lost in the waning minutes of the third quarter. And so Bartlett's undefeated record was preserved.

In the locker room, immediately following the battle, with hilarious sounds of Bartlett

rooters' snake dancing coming in from outside, weary athletes dropped on benches and crawled painfully but joyfully out of dirt-caked togs.

"Boy, what an argument!" expostulated Big Jim, petting a gash above one eye tenderly.

"And what a Santa Claus!" jollied Matt Chapin, hugging the star fullback who had tried to barricade himself in a corner. "Dropped a couple nice little forward passes down the chimney and hands us the game!"

"Hey, you guys! I'm not to blame. Slim is. He caught 'em!" protested Bob as fellow team-mates took a hand at good-naturedly pummeling him. "Come over here, Slim, and take your medicine!"

But Slim very wisely stayed away. The substitute fullback also remained aloof, dressing quietly and sullenly by himself.

"Bob loves that stuff," he muttered, bitterly. "Likes to be made a lot over. I'm going to have a show-down on this thing. And it might as well come now as any time!"

The substitute fullback sauntered over to quarterback Chapin who was just in the act of tying his shoes.

"Listen, Matt," he said, in a low tone, "I

didn't mean to get sore this afternoon but several things got my goat."

Matt glanced at Rusty severely.

"Something was wrong! I'll sure say that. Vet like you ought to know better than pull the stuff you pulled today."

"But there was some stuff pulled on me, don't forget that!" retorted Rusty, feelingly. "I didn't get a square deal!"

"Yeah?" queried Matt, bitingly.

Fellow players, attracted by a sudden raising of voices and the evident hostile attitudes of the two, moved over closer to be in on the affair.

"For John's sake! You still crabbing?" razzed Big Jim. "Why don't you hire an airport?"

Rusty's face colored. He paid no heed to the rebuke, however, and continued his protest to Matt.

"Listen, I gained considerable yards today. More'n Ed and Stew put together. But when time for the big punch comes you don't use me. What's the answer?"

"Strategy," snapped Matt. "Hale was looking for you to carry the ball on the first

touchdown, so I crossed 'em up. On the second, well—that was different. I thought if there was a possible chance of Bob's getting in the game, just for a minute, it might turn the trick."

Rusty glanced about the locker room. Delano himself was sitting quietly on a bench not ten feet away. And Matt was now talking for the benefit of all who might be interested.

"But *I* can forward pass!" declared the substitute fullback, coming out in the open. "And, with all credit to Bob I don't see why . . ."

"You had a chance to forward pass in the second quarter," reminded Matt, "and, believe me, brother, I wasn't anxious to see that heave duplicated!"

Fellow team-mates laughed. Why should Rusty get all steamed up over this anyway? He'd played most of the game and no one was blaming him for the few places he had fallen short. Rusty was just too sensitive about his playing, that was all. Touchy over the possibility of suffering by comparison.

"I suppose Bob never had a pass intercepted?" flared the substitute fullback. "I

suppose he never missed a kick after touch-down?"

"Not very many!" rejoined the Bartlett quarterback, "Have you, Bob?"

The star fullback stood to his feet, apparently embarrassed.

"What's the difference whether I have or haven't?" he gave answer. "Rusty played a bang-up game today and I don't mind saying so. We're all playing to win, aren't we? And coach is running this team. Then what's all these personalities about?"

The substitute fullback nodded his head, wryly.

"That's easy enough for you to say!" he retorted. "Pretty well satisfied with yourself, aren't you? Darned afraid I might steal a little of your fire. Got your buddies on the team pulling for you, too. Even had some of 'em circulating the rumor that I tried to knock you out in scrimmage! Trying to queer me with the team and the college! Oh, I'm wise to you, Bob. You can't pull a slicker on me! I'm serving notice right here and now that I'm not putting up with it any longer."

The star fullback elbowed his way through the circle surrounding Bartlett's irate substitute that he might come face to face with him.

"See here, Rusty," he said, choosing his words carefully, "if you think I've got it in for you, you're all wet. Some of the boys told me lately you were out after me but I wouldn't believe it. Anyhow, whatever's the case, let's forget it. We've all got to pull together if we finish this season undefeated . . . and we can't let any personal grudges stand in the way. What do you say? Here's my hand on it."

For a long second the rivals for the same position stood eyeing each other. Bob kept his hand extended, face breaking into a smile.

"Come on," he invited, pleasantly.

"Not me!" Rusty decided, "That's a fine grand stand move, but it doesn't mean anything. I'll play for the team, don't worry, but I'm not playing into your hands!"

With this the substitute fullback turned on his heel and strode from the clubhouse, closely followed by his room-mate, Crutch Edgecombe.

"Now maybe you'll believe papa," Big Jim addressed Bob dryly, as fellow players looked

at one another concernedly. "Dissension in the ranks, boys! I've been seeing it coming for some time. You know, if we could ever be absolutely certain that Rusty dropped on Bob on purpose . . .!"

"Yes but you can't," said Bartlett's star fullback, "so I say, give him the benefit of the doubt. If I'd been wrongly accused of such a thing I'd be hopping mad myself. Maybe that's most of what's the trouble with Rusty. He thinks we're down on him and is blaming us for everything that happens."

"What an optimist you are!" replied Matt Chapin, scoffingly. "That guy's had something on his chest all season."

"And a chip on his shoulder!" added Slim Tyler.

"And we all know what's behind it," spoke up Ed Raymond.

"And it isn't . . . er . . . football!" clinched Big Jim, knowingly.

Bob's face flushed.

"But even that's a matter of sportsmanship," he insisted.

"May the best man win, eh?" guessed Stew Anderson. "Bob, I always thought you were

an idealist. Now I know it. That old saying sounds nice and chivalrous and probably was the cat's chin whiskers back in the days of knights and ladies . . . but the best man doesn't always win in these unromantic and hectic times. So don't be wasting too much sympathy on Rusty. He's not worth it."

The star fullback smiled. "I'm not worrying," he said, confidently. "Just the same I hope Rusty doesn't kick up any more of a fuss around the field."

"If he does we'll take his head off," promised Big Jim.

To which fellow team-mates readily assented.

And there, for the time being, the matter was left to rest.

CHAPTER VI

A BAFFLING HAPPENING

AS MIGHT have been expected, all news accounts of the Bartlett-Hale game featured a certain star player's contribution to the net result. The Bartlett *Eagle*, in particular, had the following to say:

Bob Delano lent the magic of his presence and the unerringness of his forward passing arm for one fleeting moment in the third quarter and this loan was quite sufficient for Bartlett to travel 31 yards to a touchdown which represented her margin of victory over the powerful Hale eleven.

"Can you beat that?" exclaimed the substitute fullback, passing the paper over to his room-mate. "And look at the mention I get!" He traced down the column with his finger and stopped at a two-sentenced paragraph.

Rusty Milburn, starting the game in Bob's position, played almost three quarters and gave a good account of himself. His feature play was the overtaking and

downing of Stanley, Hale end, who had intercepted a pass and who came within an ace of converting this interception into a touchdown.

"Oh, well, you're that much better off than I am," joshed Crutch. "My name wasn't even mentioned and I played the whole game. I consider myself lucky to be listed in the line-up."

"Yeah, but you're different," declared Rusty. "Linesmen seldom get any mention. But backfield men . . . reporters ought to give a fellow a better break. Of course, I realize what Bob did was most spectacular . . . but then again, it was a lot because he did it. I'll bet if I'd stayed in the game and thrown those passes, they wouldn't have considered it wonderful."

"Listen, Rus," counseled Crutch, "just a tip. I understand how you feel and all that but the other fellows can't see things your way and if you let 'em see that things like this get your goat, you'll only get a worse deal. Take my advice and cover up. They'll think more of you for it and you'll get further."

The substitute fullback glowered.

"That's just the trouble. I went too long without opening up. Why should I keep quiet and let those guys get away with murder?"

"The point I'm making," suggested Crutch, diplomatically, "is that, if they're showing favoritism now, they're liable to show more unless you play up to 'em a little."

"Play up?" retorted Rusty, resentfully, "I don't have to play up. I've got the stuff and they know it. What I intend to do is make those birds like it!"

Crutch shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I'm for you," he assured, "but it seems to me you're picking a tough road. Remember that old saying—you can catch more flies with syrup than you can with vinegar?"

The substitute fullback shook his head rebelliously.

"That's not the way I deal with things," he said, "I'm straight from the shoulder and if anyone doesn't like it—well, it's just too bad!"

Rusty's room-mate sat for a moment, staring thoughtfully in front of him.

"All right," he said, finally, arising. "Go to it. But whatever happens will be your funeral, not mine. I could see where you had a little

grievance at the start but I'm beginning to think now that I'm rooming with a sorehead."

And with that, Bartlett's right tackle strode out into the hall, slamming the door behind him.

"Hey, wait a minute! What's the big idea?" the surprised Rusty shouted after him, racing to the door.

But Crutch had already descended the stairs on his way to the street.

"Sorehead!" repeated the substitute full-back, and laughed bitterly. "So Crutch called me a sorehead!" His face sobered. "Well, if Crutch called me that it's worth thinking about."

"You know, Norma, I believe I'm being shadowed!"

Anne made this startling statement a few nights later after stepping inside the dormitory, the two girls having come across the darkened campus from the library.

"What do you mean?" Norma glanced at her room-mate, wonderingly.

"That someone's following me around!"

"Nonsense, Anne!" ridiculed Norma.

"No, I'm quite sure," insisted Anne. "You remember, I went out just before dinner and when I crossed the campus I saw a man standing over by the three elms, staring at me. I didn't think so much of it then and I went on down to Grieg's Stationery store but when I came out—there he was—on the other side of the street, still staring at me. I thought even then it was just a coincidence but just now, as we came in, there he was—standing right in the alleyway beyond the dorm!"

"What?" Norma gave a half shriek.

"*That* wasn't an accident!" declared Anne. "Whoever he is, he's trailing me for some reason."

"Do you suppose he's still out there?" asked Norma. "If he is, let's go right up to him and demand to know what his idea is!"

"Oh, I . . ." Anne started to protest.

But Norma, with a show of resolution, opened the door and stepped outside. Anne followed, tremblingly, and watched as Norma ventured to the side of the dormitory and looked into the alleyway.

"Oh!"

At Norma's scream, Anne turned with the

thought of calling help but she halted as the scream was followed by a high-pitched, nervous laugh.

"My, you gave me a scare!" Norma waved to Anne. "Oh, Anne! Come here! It's only Rusty!"

"Only *me!*" protested Rusty. "Well, I like that!"

"But Anne thought you were some sort of a bogie man!" laughed Norma relieved.

"Rusty Milburn! How long have you been there?" demanded Anne, approaching him.

"Oh, about five minutes," grinned Rusty. "What's the matter with you girls anyhow? What's all the excitement?"

"But you're not the person I saw there a moment ago," said Anne positively.

"He must have been!" insisted Norma. "Unless . . . did you see anyone . . . any stranger . . . standing about where you're standing now?"

The substitute fullback looked his amusement.

"No, I didn't."

"Well," said Anne, bewildered, "may I ask you, please, what you are doing here?"

"Yes, Mr. Milburn!" seconded Norma, facetiously, "kindly account for us finding you in such close proximity to the girls' dormitory!"

"Why, I . . . er . . . am waiting for somebody," Rusty explained, his face sobering.

"And are we to infer it's a girl friend?" asked Norma, with a mischievous glance at Anne.

Rusty's face reddened.

"Not this time." His answer carried a suggestion of evasiveness. "Tell me, Anne, what did this man, whom you thought you saw, look like?"

Anne hesitated, uncertainly. "Well, now that would be difficult to say. I didn't get a chance to see him close-up so as to get much idea of his features. But he was wearing a dark felt hat and dark suit and he wore the hat pretty much on one side . . . like a tough."

"Hey!" protested Rusty, "what's she doing—describing *me*?"

"She's been awfully nervous lately," explained Norma, "I still think it was you she saw. Oh, here's the way to clear up the mys-

tery. Were you on the campus, down by the three elms, just before dinner tonight?"

Rusty shook his head. "Not me."

"Well, were you, a little later, across the street from Grieg's Stationery store?"

Again Rusty shook his head. "It certainly must have been another fellow! Say, Anne—maybe you need a bodyguard! Let me offer my services!"

Anne smiled. "No thanks. Though I've no doubt you'd make a good one. Well, I must go in and do some studying, odd as that may sound."

"Me, too!" joined in Norma. "If it's Crutch you're waiting for and he's inside talking to Josephine shall I remind him that time still exists and you're still outside?"

"Do that!" urged Rusty. Then, to Anne, "I'll be seeing you soon. Perhaps we can take in a picture show."

"If I can ever get this work caught up!" promised Anne.

"And if she can't, just call me any time!" jested Norma.

Inside, Norma, her curiosity aroused, hurried down the hall and looked into the recep-

tion room. She returned to Anne perplexed.

"That's funny," she announced, "Crutch and Josephine aren't there and Crutch is the only person I can think of Rusty's waiting for here. There's no visitors present and I'm certain Rusty's not waiting for a girl. He's too dead set on you for that. What do you suppose . . .?"

Anne shook her head. "I'm sure I don't know. And I think it's less of our business. But I would like to know whom it was that I saw standing there when we first came in."

"But you described Rusty perfectly," asserted Norma, "Except for his hat being on lopsided which could easily have been changed. I really think, Anne, that you . . ."

"But Rusty said he wasn't downtown before dinner," reminded Anne, "And I certainly know him well enough not to mistake him."

"Well, it looks then as though this is going to resolve itself into one of those 'who killed cock robin' things," decided Norma, "And I do so hate inexplicable mysteries! Why, I misplaced a notebook yesterday and I was about wild until I'd figured out how and why and where the thing had disappeared. Oh,

Anne—do you suppose that person could have been . . . what's his name—Louie?"

Anne started. The two were about to enter their room on the third floor.

"N-no, it wasn't Louie. I don't recall ever having seen this man before."

Turning the lock, Anne swung open the door and started in. She stopped suddenly, a hand going to her throat in terror.

"Oh, Norma!"

The interior of the room was a wreck. Contents of table and dresser drawers were strewn on the floor. Jewel boxes had been emptied, the pigeon holes of a small desk rifled, everything gone through, apparently in mad haste. The window leading out onto the fire escape overlooking the alleyway was open. A small clock, on the dresser, was one of the few things which had remained untouched and its hands now pointed to a quarter after ten.

"Now!" cried Anne, "Will you believe that I was being followed?"

"What a mess!" exclaimed Norma, "Oh, if they've taken my Alpha Theta ring! . . . No, it's here. Why, it doesn't look like they'd touched much. I mean—taken much away—

goodness knows they've *touched* everything."

"Look at our letters!" pointed Anne, "They've been sorted over, too. Here's some I received from Mr. Naylor, enclosing my allowances. And some I'd been saving that Uncle Billy wrote me!"

Agonizedly, the two girls made a hurried inspection of the room and determined, with a sense of great relief, that nothing—so far as they could discern—had been taken.

"We must have gotten back just in time," deduced Norma, "Say, weren't we lucky! But Anne, there must have been two men who did this job. The one you saw watching you was probably keeping tab on your whereabouts . . . and probably mine . . . so he could tip off his accomplice when to get busy. Don't you suppose?"

Anne considered.

"That's probably it," she affirmed, "And when he saw us come in he gave the other man the signal to 'beat it.' Our room was no doubt being ransacked as we entered the dorm!"

Norma clutched Anne's arm.

"Rusty!" she gasped, "How could he have been down there, when he was, without see-

ing . . .? Now I'm the one who's being ridiculous but this thing's getting so awfully complicated. Just the same, I'd like to know just why Rusty was there and . . ."

Anne hastened to the window and looked down into the alleyway.

"He's not there now," she said, "Oh, whatever we do, we mustn't embarrass Rusty. He couldn't be mixed up in this. And just the mentioning of his name as being nearby would cause him trouble."

Norma nodded, on her way to the phone.

"You're right about that. I'll call the matron and have her come up. Better let her call the police. And don't touch anything more, dearie. I've read in books that detectives want things left just the way they were found so any possible evidence won't be destroyed!"

Anne smiled, nervously.

"What would I do without you?"

"Huh!" sniffed Norma, as she took down the receiver, "If I find out for sure that this raid has been made on your account, you may *have* to do without me! I may look like I'm thriving on this excitement but wait till it's over—I'll have to go to bed for a week!"

CHAPTER VII

BUZZ GETS GREAT NEWS

“WHOOPEE!” shouted Buzz, breaking into his room several afternoons later, tossing his books upon the floor, and dancing fantastically about. “Some more Whoopees! Mother pin a rose on me! . . . The birds in Springtime—tra, la, la! Oh, where, oh where has my little dog gone? Oh where, oh where has he flea-d?”

Bob, sitting by the window, snapped shut his law book with a hopeless gesture and sat watching the insane exhibition.

“What kind of a new dance do you call that?” he asked.

“Interpretative with the emphasis upon futuristic,” explained Buzz.

“Well, kindly interpret,” requested the one-man audience, “It looks like a lot of boloney to me!”

“This dance,” announced Buzz, still keeping weirdly in motion, “Excuse me while I get in another ‘Whoopee!’ . . . This dance is

symbolic—it's supposed to represent a playwright's mad joy at having had his first play accepted!"

Bob's law book slipped from his fingers to the floor.

"Impossible!"

"My dear fellow, anything's possible these days. Look me over! I'm not rooming with you any longer. You're rooming with *me*! A famous man—the author of the Dramatic Club's Annual play!"

The news seemed to daze Bob.

"You mean—that play you read me a scene 'of a week or so ago?'" asked the star fullback, incredulously.

"That's it!" cried Buzz, "'Money To Burn'! . . ."

"Oh, my gosh!" groaned Bob.

"What's the matter?" took up Buzz, "You thinking you won't have time to act in it? Say, the club'll fix that with the pros. This is going to be the most pretentious show ever put on by the Club. President Seymour says it's the greatest play that's ever come into his hands. He says it ought to cause quite a sensation."

"Unquestionably," rejoined Bob, dryly, "That love scene alone!"

"Say, that reminds me!" raved the aspiring playwright, "I made it a point to see Anne the moment I got the news and she's already agreed to play the part of Pauline!"

Bob's mouth opened wide. "What? . . . You're kidding!"

"Am I? Call her up and ask her! She said she'd be tickled pink . . . or . . . er . . . words to that effect! . . . Anyhow, she's to report for reading rehearsal this Sunday at the conference room in the library. And you're to be there, too!"

"Hey, have I said I'd be in this atrocity yet?" protested Bob.

"You'll be in it all right," declared Buzz, confidently, "That's why I took the trouble to get Anne's consent first."

Bob grinned. "When's this play to be presented?"

"Monday evening before Thanksgiving," informed Buzz.

"But—great cutting razor blades! That's just five days before our biggest game of the year with Pennington!"

"Coach Edwards has given his okay to the date," replied Buzz, "So why should you kick?"

The star fullback ran a hand through his hair and scratched his head, debatingly.

"You seem to have taken care of about everything," he was forced to admit.

"Bring up some other objection!" challenged Buzz.

"That's the heck of it, I can't think of any," surrendered Bob, "Got the rest of your cast picked?"

"Not yet. I haven't been very excited about anybody except the principals. But with the most popular fellow in college as my leading man and the leading lady a girl as favorably known as Anne, well—we ought to pack 'em in!"

"I see. Don't make any difference to you whether we can act or not, just so we're drawing cards," observed Bob.

"That's the main idea," confessed Buzz, frankly, "You don't need to worry about your histrionic ability. I'm going to direct my play and I'll show you how I want the parts played."

“So you’re to have complete say-so, eh?”

“Well, President Seymour has appointed a committee to help me select the rest of the cast. And, of course I don’t have to think about such things as the scenery or props or lighting or ticket selling. My big job is staging the piece. As Seymour said, ‘they want the same inspiration in the production that I had in the writing.’ And so they’ve given me what amounts to *carte blanche*, if you know what that means.”

“What part is she going to play?” kidded Bob, and Buzz, in the act of picking up his study books, hurled them at him.

“All joshing aside,” said the star fullback, deftly catching the books, “You’re to be congratulated, Buzz. I know how hard you’ve worked at this play writing business. I remember the two years before when you turned in plays that you shed your life’s blood on and they didn’t even get honorable mention. But you were a glutton for punishment. You kept coming back for more. And here’s one who hopes this play is a tremendous success . . . and, if my being in it helps it any, I’m going to be just that much more pleased.”

Bob held out his hand. The aspiring playwright took it with something akin to moisture in his eyes.

"Why is it?" he asked, a bit chokingly, "That a dub like me has the idea he can do something big some day? Right now, of course, this play seems like it's . . . well, I was reading it over the other night and I honestly could hardly believe I'd written it."

"I know the feeling," said Bob, softly, "I've felt it sometimes in football games—a kind of feeling of power that doesn't seem like you—that somehow seems more than you. And while you've got it, you'd swear you could top the whole world."

"Yeah—and after a little while, when you can look back on what you've done—it doesn't seem so wonderful any more," declared Buzz, sadly, "That's the tough part about life."

"Oh, I don't know," rejoined Bob, with more the attitude of the philosopher, "That's the very thing that keeps us bucking the line hard. And some day maybe we will break through for some *real* gain! Who knows?"

Buzz tightened his grip on Bob's hand.

For purposes best known to the detectives,

no publicity was given out on the attempted robbery at Hadden Dormitory. It was learned that no other room save Anne's and Norma's had been molested and, inasmuch as nothing had been taken, the motive for the ransacking went undetermined. It was Anne's opinion, however, that the police considered the job done by a college student.

"I don't!" she took issue.

"I don't either," agreed Norma, "Aren't detectives funny fish? They may have a good idea right now as to who did the job but they wouldn't give us a hint. Personally, I think they're acting secretive because they don't know a thing! The way they soft-shoed around looking for finger prints and the crazy questions they asked us!"

Anne laughed.

"Yes, and that detective with the double chin asking you if a fellow had ever written you a bunch of love letters, it being his idea that he might have broken in, trying to get them back!"

"Wasn't that a scream? Say, if this mystery's solved, looks like we'd have to do it and the more I think of it, the more I feel we

ought to put Rusty Milburn on the carpet. I don't care what you say, he acted mighty peculiar that night and I'll never be entirely satisfied until he explains just what he was doing and who he was waiting for."

"All right," decided Anne, "If it will relieve your mind any, I'll cross-examine Rusty when he calls tonight."

"Good!" commented Norma, "According to all the latest mystery novels a person shouldn't be above suspecting anybody. I've read a couple of them since this happened just to get an idea of the technique employed in arriving at the guilty party. And it's always the one you'd swear is innocent who committed the murder . . . which doesn't make it look so good for Rusty."

Anne smiled. "You know, Norma, I really think you're trying to get the biggest possible thrill out of this!"

"How can I?" Norma lamented, "When those . . . er . . . *dicks* . . . won't let you talk to anyone about it? I've been on the point of telling someone dozens of times and I've just about bitten the end of my

tongue off. It's no thrill keeping anything to yourself!"

The Luna Lite Picture House, situated just three blocks from the campus, did a thriving business despite the fact that certain professors decried the movies as a baneful community influence and an insult to ordinary intelligence.

"Our intelligence isn't ordinary to begin with," one wit remarked after listening to a professorial tirade, "And we're not going to quarrel over whether the movies are Art or not. The reason we go to them is to forget for an hour or two that there's such things as studies and profs. And this alone is enough to justify the movie's existence!"

Anne's attendance with Rusty was more prompted, however, by a desire to gain some relaxation from the severe strain she had felt herself under. The substitute fullback was always good company. She would take this occasion, too, of relieving Norma's mind by getting from Rusty an explanation as to his activities the evening that their room was entered.

On the way to the theatre, her escort, in unusually good spirits, declared himself to be in possession of news which would undoubtedly interest her.

"And what is that?" asked Anne, frankly curious.

"I've been selected by the Dramatic Club," announced Rusty, with a tinge of pride, "To take a lead rôle in their Annual Play."

"Oh, you have!" exclaimed Anne, "That is interesting!"

Rusty grinned.

"I'll say so. They tell me I'm to play a love scene with you!"

Anne's face colored prettily.

"Are you?" she asked, surprised, "My, the play must be full of love scenes. I didn't know about this one but I'm supposed to have another one with Bob!"

It was Rusty's turn to register surprise.

"Bob? . . . Is he in this show, too?"

Anne nodded. "What part are you to play?"

"The part of Jacques Brugnion," said Rusty, with less assurance, "Buzz Turner, he's the author . . . told me he was one of the best characters in the play."

“That’s what he told me about the character of Pauline, too,” smiled Anne, “Every part’s a good part to an author is a very true saying.”

“Well, of course I haven’t read the play yet,” confessed the substitute fullback, lamely.

“Nor I,” said Anne, “But I judge, from what I was told of it, that you’re the handsome villain!”

Rusty’s face fell.

“Wait till I get hold of that guy Turner! I naturally thought, when he said you were to have the feminine lead and that I was to have a love scene with you that I was to be the leading man! Looks like he’d put one over on me!”

“Maybe you took too much for granted,” suggested Anne, mischievously, “Playwrights aren’t making their villains so villainy these days.”

“It’s what I get for always letting them cast me in heavy parts,” lamented Rusty, “But if I’d known that Bob had been chosen for leading man!”

“What would you have done?” asked Anne, artfully.

Rusty hesitated. "Well, I don't know as I'd accepted."

"Why not?"

"Oh, a number of reasons. Main one is that we've been rivals for the same position on the team and Bob's terrifically jealous of me."

"Bob? . . . Jealous?"

"Is he? You should have seen the scene we had in the locker room after the Hale game!"

"Why, I'd never have thought . . . what happened?" asked Anne, concernedly.

Rusty shrugged his shoulders, in a gesture intended to be taken as magnanimous.

"I'm sorry, Anne. I shouldn't even have mentioned this. We're not supposed to give out anything that takes place on the field or in the locker room. So just forget it. I'm paying no attention to Bob's attitude anyway."

The two had reached the front of the theatre at this point and Anne was left to her own thoughts as Rusty stepped in line for tickets. What in the world had come over Bob? Or was this just a side of him she hadn't been aware of? It was hard to imagine Bob being jealous of anyone. She hadn't heard from him

in over a week but he'd no doubt been very busy. The team was to make a road trip to Madison this week-end.

"Oh, I hope Rusty's mistaken about Bob," Anne told herself, feelingly, "It would hurt to know he was that sort."

As is so often the case, the picture itself was on a subject Anne was trying to get away from. Entitled, "The Great Air Mystery," a melodramatic plot was unfolded which dear old Professor Bostwick would have pronounced "spineless and utterly illogical" but which, somehow, kept one on edge from the first grim murder to the last flimsy clue.

"My, I'm glad that's over!" Anne declared at the finish.

Rusty jollied her for taking the movie so seriously. But Anne, despite an attempt to be carefree, could not conceal her true feelings. Rusty sensed that something was troubling her but tactfully refrained from questioning and it was only after her dormitory was in sight that Anne finally mustered up courage to make the inquiry she had promised Norma.

"Rusty," she said, haltingly, "You may think it strange for me to be disturbed about

this, but what on earth were you doing outside our dorm the other night?"

The query caught the substitute fullback by surprise, judging from his tardiness in making answer.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" he finally retorted, with a lightness which, to Anne, seemed assumed.

"Indeed I would!" she insisted.

"Why so?" demanded Rusty, "Do you suspect me of something?"

Anne's face flushed.

"No, it's not that, but I can't understand yet, in the light of what's happened, how you could have been where you were at that particular time, without having noticed anything."

Rusty's eyes widened.

"What you talking about?"

"Well," considered Anne, "I suppose it's only fair to tell you, though the police said it would be better if we didn't tell anybody for awhile."

The substitute fullback stopped under the three elms. The light from campus arc lights scarcely penetrated here and a bench offered a secluded nook.

"Sit down," he invited, "I hope you think you can trust me."

"Oh, it isn't that at all," assured Anne, seating herself, "I've hardly known what to do about this. But after thinking I'd seen a man shadowing me, and Norma and I had gone out and run into you . . . we went up to our room and found that it had been entered from the balcony which connects with the fire escape. Everything was turned topsy-turvy but nothing was taken and we've been at a loss to know what whoever's object was in going through our stuff. We had nothing of particular value to begin with. But the mystery of the whole thing has worried us. It's given us a sort of feeling of not knowing what to expect next."

"Hmmm!" said the substitute fullback when Anne had finished, "That's darn peculiar! And you say you discovered your room in that condition just a couple minutes after leaving me?"

"Yes, and not so awfully long after my seeing the stranger standing right where *you* were standing," emphasized Anne, "Think, Rusty! You must have seen somebody when you came up. Why, Norma and I just stepped inside the

dorm where I told her about this man . . . and then we stepped right out again . . . hardly more than two minutes' difference, yet he was gone and you were there. Where'd you come from?"

"Why, I'd been downtown," recalled Rusty, "And was on my way back. I passed the dorm and, as I did so, I thought I saw someone I knew across the campus so I waited there in the alleyway for them to come up and just then Norma came out and hailed me."

Anne studied a moment.

"But if you were that close, didn't you see us when we crossed the campus?"

Rusty shook his head.

"No, I must have swung around the corner just after you girls went in."

"But even then—I can't get that strange man off my mind—how you could have missed seeing him?" persisted Anne.

The substitute fullback gave a little gesture of impatience.

"How many times do I have to tell you? I saw no one . . . except the persons I thought I knew."

"But why did you stop in the alleyway if

you wanted to meet them?" asked Anne, pointedly, "The alleyway was in the shadows and no one could see you at a distance. That sounds to me as though you wanted to evade them!"

"Listen, Anne!" Rusty's voice was strained. "You're working yourself all up over something that doesn't amount to anything."

"But it seems logical enough to me," insisted Anne, "If I'd been waiting for someone I wanted to see I'd have stood out in the light where they could have sighted me. If this doesn't amount to anything, who were the folks you thought you saw and did you meet them after we went in?"

"No," replied Rusty, shortly, "I found I'd been mistaken. It wasn't them after all."

"But who did they look like? Who did you think they were?" demanded Anne, "Is this such a secret?"

"For Pete's sake, Anne, ring off! What are you trying to give me—the third degree? If I knew anything I'd be glad to tell you. But I don't see why I should have to stand trial just because I happened to be near the dorm when this event took place!"

"I'm sorry," apologized Anne, giving up her attempt at questioning, "I suppose all this does seem ridiculous to you. But I've developed a fine headache trying to figure this thing out."

The substitute fullback leaned forward.

"Don't you have even the slightest idea as to who might have done it?"

Anne hesitated. "Y-e-s, I do . . . a sort of suspicion."

"Who is it? Someone we both know?"

"No, I don't think you ever . . . yes, you did, too. You met him. But I'm not at all sure he had anything to do with this yet. That's the reason I was hoping you might have seen something which would have furnished a definite clue. As it is, I don't like to mention names for fear of doing someone an injustice."

"I understand," sympathized Rusty, "But at the same time, if you've any grounds for suspicion, you've got to come out with it or there'll be no way of tracing."

"Well," decided Anne, "I'll tell you this much. You met him the night you came to tell me about Bob. Remember?"

"Oh, *that* guy?" Rusty whistled. "Do I remember? If you don't mind my saying so,

I never liked his looks from the first."

"He is a rather worthless sort," Anne admitted, ashamedly, "A cousin of mine."

"Ah! A relative!" Rusty looked relieved. "Well, they're always apt to cause trouble!"

"This one wanted money," informed Anne, nervously, "And because I had none to give him, he threatened me."

Rusty nodded.

"That sounds suspicious all right. Go on."

Anne's lips tightened. "That's really all you need to know. The rest is a personal matter."

The substitute fullback clenched his fists.

"I see. Well, I'm darn glad I got a good look at that bird. You don't have to worry from here on, Anne. I'll keep my eyes open for him and nab him on sight. You'd like him caught, wouldn't you?"

"If he's still around," consented Anne, "Because I'm positive he wouldn't remain in Bartlett unless it had something to do with me. And I certainly want nothing to do with him!" She shuddered.

Rusty patted her on the shoulder.

"Just take it easy. Don't be alarmed about anything. I'll watch out for you."

"Oh, Rusty—thanks—but I don't want to trouble you. I . . ."

"No trouble at all! If you're afraid to go out anywhere just give me a ring at any time and I'll be at your service. It'll pay to play safe until you know what's what!"

The two arose, Anne heading in the direction of her dormitory.

"You can begin now by getting me safely to Hadden House," she accepted, smilingly, "I have some studying to do to make up for the good time I've had this evening."

Rusty bowed. "Thank you. We'll go out again soon." On taking leave of Anne he squeezed her hand reassuringly. And Anne, standing on the front steps a moment, looked after his departing form, debatingly.

"He still hasn't told me who he was waiting for that night," she pondered, "I wonder? Am I getting too worked up over things or did he just tell me that to discourage my asking him questions?"

Anne ran up the remaining steps and into the dormitory. Norma would be anxiously awaiting her return. She would ask her what she thought of Rusty's evasiveness.

CHAPTER VIII

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

"SEE here, Buzz, you choosing members of your play cast with malice aforethought?"

The room-mate of the aspiring playwright strode into the room and banged the door shut behind him. Buzz jumped instinctively.

"Don't shoot!" he begged, "What in thunder's gone wrong now? What have I done? The author's always to blame!"

"Giving Rusty Milburn a part!" denounced Bob, "You ought to have known better than that!"

"Why, what's the matter with *him*? He's the best actor of villain parts in college!" protested Buzz, greatly aggrieved.

"He should be!" rejoined the star fullback, "He's experienced enough. That guy's a real villain in my life!"

The aspiring playwright groaned.

"For John's sake, you going to let a little thing like a personal enmity interfere with

your acting? You *are* temperamental! Why, say—some of the world's greatest actors and actresses have hated each other but they have played side by side, night after night, and to look at them from the front you'd have sworn they were bosom friends! What did they do it for? Because they realized that the play was the thing, that the stage was bigger than themselves."

"Horse radish!" decried the star fullback.

"Why, look even at *me!*" pointed out Buzz, "I need a good comedienne—to play the part of Gwendolyn Murfee, an affected, silly girl who's doing Europe with her silly mother and brother on money that her bricklayer father has made in Florida during the boom. And who do I decide on for the part? That perfect sap—Edwina Perry!"

Bob grinned. "Say, she's a pest! Always gushing all over the place."

"But she's also a scream," insisted Buzz, "She got mad though when she said she couldn't act and I told her she'd lay 'em in the aisle just being herself. So what did I have to do to get her?"

Bob shook his head.

“You’ve got me!”

“I used diplomacy. I knew she was dying for an invite to the Grid Club Party, remembering a crack she’d made last year when everybody passed her up. So I told her I’d like the honor of taking her and the old girl just about fell on my neck!”

Bob staggered about the room, hand to head.

“Great suffering cheese cake! Boy, you are a martyr!”

“Not at all,” denied the aspiring playwright, modestly, “I’m just one who appreciates that no sacrifice is too great for Art!”

The star fullback howled.

“Well, after that example my own objection pales into insignificance,” he said, finally, “You’ll hear no more squawks out of me. I’m not really sore at Rusty anyway.”

“No?” Buzz looked bewildered.

“Rusty’s sore at me,” Bob explained, “And he’s seemed to want to cause trouble. That was the only reason I objected.”

Buzz wiped his perspiring brow.

“Oh, you’ll get along all right together,” he assured, “You’ve got to. The success of my play depends on it.”

“Buzz,” rejoined he who had been chosen for leading man, “As a playwright you’re still in doubt, but as a soft soaper you’ve no equal!”

Pepped and primed for the Madison University game, the Bartlett College eleven entrained Friday for the scene of combat. Approximately two hundred student rooters left with the team, the journey to Madison being an appreciable one and discouraging all but the most affluent from attending. But those investing the necessary dough for the trip were paid big dividends in witnessing one of Bob Delano’s greatest gridiron exhibitions. Madison’s special defense, built to stop the Bartlett flash, failed to function except as a further aid to Bartlett. At times Madison men piled five and six in a heap as they tried to block the flying comet. But the blue-jerseyed phantom bearing the numeral “44” always seemed to elude their grasp just when it appeared that the defense had been made puncture-proof. Bob scored three touchdowns in the first quarter and gave way to Rusty Milburn who continued the Bartlett offensive in less spectacular fashion.

Back again in the third quarter the irresistible Delano got loose for a seventy yard run, aided by brilliant interference, carrying the ball across for touchdown number four and calling it a day by adding his fourth extra point after touchdown on a drop kick. There was a little something for Rusty to shoot at. He *would* charge him with being afraid of his fire being stolen, would he? All right . . . the substitute fullback was to be in the game as long as he today . . . let's see him equal the four touchdowns!

That Rusty recognized the challenge in Bob's dashing play was evident by his glowering expression. So the star fullback was trying to rub it in, eh? The trouble was, the line didn't work as hard for him as it worked for Bob! . . . There was a noticeable letting down just as soon as he got in the game! That was what a 'rep' did for you. Bob's presence inspired; his presence seemed to deaden. Besides, he was seldom in the game when the Bartlett eleven was in dire need of scoring. This fact also legislated against him.

"But folks on the sidelines don't realize

this," he muttered, disconsolately, "All they see is what happens on the surface and I, of course, suffer by comparison!"

A belated rally in the last quarter brought a moment of joy to downcast Madison rooters when their eleven, hitherto rated as one of the strongest in Madison history, forward passed its way to two touchdowns. The Bartlett second team was opposing, however, and took the play away from Madison in the waning minutes of the game by itself putting over a touchdown with Rusty Milburn finally carrying the ball across.

The score at the end was:

BARTLETT	35
MADISON	13

And Bartlett's official scorer, snapping shut his book, declared jauntily: "Only have to record two more victories and the old national championship's in the bag!"

"But Great Western and Pennington are the toughest of the lot!" a Bartlett fan warned.

"That's what they've been saying about our last five opponents," rejoined the scorer, "But

we've a certain party who makes the tough ones look soft!"

"That Bob's a whole team in himself!" agreed the rooter, warmly, "I wouldn't give a nickel for our chances without him!"

The first rehearsal of the Dramatic Club's selection for its Annual Play was an auspicious event. It was an occasion particularly momentous for the play's author who experienced a difficult time trying not to act too important and yet important enough.

"The cast must respect my authority from the start or I'll never be able to direct 'em," Buzz had declared in private to Bob, "So kindly help things along by setting a good example."

"Yes, Mr. Turner," joshed the prospective leading man, "Anything you say, Mr. Turner. Do I read this line right, Mr. Turner?"

"Oh, go sit on a church steeple!" grinned Buzz, "You get what I mean. I've got to throw enough dignity to impress 'em."

"Why don't you wear a swallow tail and a wing collar?"

"Nothing doing. I'm going to try to look human even though I am an author."

"I hope you succeed," geyed Bob, with a look, which made it appear as though he were in deadly earnest, "Look out, don't throw that alarm clock! Throw the vase if you've got to throw something!"

Edwina Perry, selected comedy character, did not wait to receive her sides before entertaining other members of the cast with her gushing wise cracks. While all were waiting in the conference room of the library this Sunday afternoon, Edwina took occasion to do a rave about the man who wrote the play they were to enact.

"Oh, I think 'Money To Burn' is perfectly marvelous!" she declared, "Have any of you read it yet? No? Mr. Turner loaned me his copy. I wouldn't consent to take the part until I knew what it was all about. You see I'm only fitted to certain types. But imagine how thrilled I was to have Mr. Turner confess he'd written the character of Gwendolyn Murfee with me in mind! . . ."

"Yes, that must have been aggravating," agreed Rusty, with a wink at Anne, "I . . . er . . . mean . . . exciting!"

“Well, let me tell you!” rejoined Edwina, “And funny! Say, this part’s a riot! Buzz said I’d have ’em rolling in the aisle. Of course I think he was slightly exaggerating but I really did split my sides reading the lines. You see I’m supposed to be a rather fat, impossible young thing—although I’m really just a little bit plump. And I and my brother, Claude, that’s you—Lee Summers—are paying twenty francs extra a week just to be considered members of a French family. Isn’t that rich? I mean—don’t you think that’s killing? Anyhow, I’m on the stage when the curtain goes up and I’m smoking a cigarette. You know—the kind that advertised that old man saying, ‘not a cough in a hundred years’! Well, I thoughtlessly, being sort of empty headed and very high hat, I—as I said—*thoughtlessly* lay the lighted cigarette down on the edge of the table. You see that’s to register that I—well, just don’t care—being one of the family. But Lulu, the maid, comes through and, horrified, seizes the cigarette from the table. This Lulu’s a scream anyway. She picks up cigarettes after me during the whole play. And you can imagine! . . . Well, I say to her, ‘Lulu,

there you go again with one of my cigarettes!' . . . and she says, 'Ah! But mademoiselle! You put cigarettes here . . . cigarettes there . . . and cigarettes there!' And I say, sticking up my nose. . . ."

Bob cleared his throat.

"That . . . er . . . is all very amusing, Miss Perry, but what do you say to waiting until Mr. Turner arrives before you proceed with the dramatization?"

"Oh, you flatter me! I didn't intend to give the entire play!"

"Perhaps it's just as well," suggested Rusty, "Because Mr. Turner would undoubtedly go over it again."

"That's right. He probably would. Oh, you're going to love *your* part! My! What a scene at the climax of the second act when you accuse Donald Williams, the American, of trying to buy the love of Proprietor Tochard's daughter, Pauline, by loaning Monsieur Tochard money to save him from ruin!"

Members of the cast could scarcely conceal their amusement. Playwright Turner was late in putting in appearance. But a show was going on just the same.

"And love scenes!" gushed Edwina, "Oh, Anne, I really think . . . well, I wept copiously reading that third act scene between you and Bob . . . I mean—Donald Williams!"

The faces of the principals colored.

"Well, well! So everybody's here!" greeted the author, suddenly flinging open the door, appearing with Dramatic Club committeemen.

"You're just in time!" welcomed Lee Summers, as Anne, Rusty and Bob, in particular, looked relieved, "Miss Perry, here, was about to give us all an idea of our parts."

"That so? Nice of her, I'm sure. Well, we won't do anything more this afternoon than read the play through. I'll pass out your books of sides so you can get an idea, in reading, who to expect your cues from. Ralph Henry, here, is to act as stage manager so look to him for prompting in the future. All set? . . . All right, Miss Perry, you're *on* . . . !"

"Shall I read the business, Mr. Turner?" inquired Edwina, her fingers trembling as she found the starting page.

"Please, Everybody! The first time—so you can familiarize yourselves with the action."

The play group, intent on the sides before them, entered into the reading with zestful interest. And, gradually, as they got into the play so that an atmosphere began to be manifest, the enthusiasm of the cast members increased.

"This play's all right!" complimented Melvin Franklin, at the conclusion of the first act. He had been assigned the part of Proprietor Rene Tochard.

"I think it ought to go myself," Lee Summers gave as his opinion.

The face of the author flushed with pleasure.

"You people read it very well," he replied, by way of returning a compliment, "I feel sure you'll be able to do a great deal with it."

With the reading finished, the consensus of opinion was sincerely and loudly favorable.

"I even think it's good and I'm his roommate," commended Bob, which remark brought a laugh.

And, for the first time in weeks, Rusty Milburn was found to be in agreement with the star fullback.

"Yes, sir!" he was fair enough to say, "This play's the best I've been asked to be

in . . . of the amateur productions, I mean . . . not counting Shaw and Ibsen."

Bob caught Buzz's eye with a mischievous glance. Shaw and Ibsen! The very writers this aspiring playwright had sought to emulate! Oh, well! Such rebuffs were to be expected by all struggling geniuses.

"Anne, may I see you to the dorm?" asked Bob, as the reading rehearsal broke up.

The star fullback sensed Rusty Milburn at his elbow, seeking the same privilege.

"Oh, thank you. Some other time, Bob. I'm meeting Norma outside," declined Anne, smilingly.

Thus did a woman's diplomacy keep a villain and hero at arm's length, sending each off with a feeling of triumph inasmuch as each had defeated the other.

"Hello! . . . Bob?"

"Yes, who is this—Anne?"

"No, Norma. You're always getting our voices confused over the phone."

It was several nights later and the hour was close to ten o'clock, a surprise call, especially to come from Norma.

"Listen, Bob, I'd like to see you for a few minutes. It's very important. Anne mustn't know."

The star fullback became gravely attentive.

"Yeah? . . . When? . . . Where?"

There was a slight hesitancy at the other end of the wire.

"Well . . . could you meet me as soon as possible at the entrance to the dorm? . . . I'm calling from the booth downstairs now. Anne thinks I've come down to mail some letters."

"Be right over," answered Bob, clicking up the receiver.

He grabbed up a sweater and cap, darting for the door, with Buzz, half-dressed, trailing after him.

"Hey! Where's the fire? What's happened?"

The star fullback reached back and straight-armed his onrushing room-mate, Buzz sitting down heavily on the floor as the door slammed.

"That's what I get," he said, ruefully, "For trying to be helpful!"

The night was exceedingly cool. Bob found, as he crossed the campus, that he was barely

comfortable with his sweater on. As he approached Hadden House he saw the figure of a girl outlined beneath the dim light above the outer door. The figure had a familiar looking wrap thrown about its shoulders.

"Why, that's not Norma—it's Anne!" exclaimed Bob, stopping still and staring. "I wonder what the deuce is up?" But, on approaching closer, Bob saw that he was mistaken. It was merely Anne's wrap, and the wearer was Norma.

"Let's get away from the dorm," said Norma as Bob reached her, "I don't want any other girls to see us here."

The star fullback took her arm and led her across the street to the shadowed and inviting expanse of the campus.

"Well, Norma, you've got me all steamed up. What's on your mind?" Bob demanded.

The two were headed toward the favorite spot—the three elms.

"Anne, of course!" replied Norma, as though it were a relief to be talking to someone, "Bob, I believe Anne's in serious danger!"

"Danger? What from?"

"A cousin of hers," informed Norma. "He

called on her several weeks ago and demanded money. Since then she's heard nothing from him though queer things have happened. We had our room entered one night when we were out and everything upset but nothing taken. We may have returned too soon for whoever did it to finish. At any rate this was hard on our nerves, as you can imagine it might be. The police, believing it a job done by a college student advised us to keep still about the matter, saying it would help them locate the guilty party. So far it hasn't. And, just tonight, I don't know whether it was Anne's imagination or not. She's been frightfully nervous lately. Anyway, about an hour ago, we were both studying when Anne looked up toward the window, let out an ungodly scream and fell in a faint. When she came to she was hysterical and it was some little time before she had quieted down enough to tell me she had seen a man's face at the window . . . staring at her. I tried to convince her she'd just been seeing things but she declared up and down that she had not. She was positive. I asked Anne if she thought she would recognize the man should she see him again. She wasn't so

sure of this, saying she'd just had a fleeting glimpse. Then we had an argument as to whether the matter should be reported or not . . . and Anne was in such a state of mind that she even got to doubting herself. She was anxious not to want to make others trouble . . . and since I'd sort of pooh-poohed the idea of a man's looking in our window, she said I might have been right and she wrong . . . and to let the whole affair drop. Then was when I thought I'd better see you."

Bob nodded.

"I'm mighty glad you felt you could come to me," rejoined Bob, "You know I think a great deal of Anne and I'd do anything I could for her."

The two reached the bench under the three elms and sat down upon it by mutual consent.

"Well, I just feel that something must be done soon to relieve this suspense she's under," said Norma, "Not to mention my own feelings. I haven't enjoyed a night's sound sleep since the evening our room was entered. The slightest noise wakes me up and I find myself wet with nervous perspiration."

"That's not such a joke, either," sym-

pathized Bob, "But, tell me. Does Anne figure it was her cousin who did the entering?"

"She doesn't know," answered Norma, "She thinks he might possibly have broken in to see if she had told him the truth about having no money. Oh, yes—and here's a peculiar thing. I wouldn't want you to breathe a word about this. Anne would kill me if she knew I was telling you. But, as we returned to the dorm that night, Anne spied a man standing in the alleyway whom she believed to have been shadowing her. She told me about it as soon as we got inside and I immediately about-faced and ran out to get a look at him myself. He was nowhere to be seen—but, lo and behold, in his place is—guess who?"

Bob shook his head.

"Rusty Milburn!"

"Well, I'll be dogged!"

"Funny coincidence, at least, wasn't it?" continued Norma, "But, stranger still, Rusty doesn't have a satisfactory explanation as to what he is doing out there and, even a couple days later, when Anne asks him who he was waiting for, he walks her off, refusing to answer. Now, what do you make of that?"

Bob gave a low whistle.

“Jingo! That’s a brain teaser, isn’t it?”

“It is when you figure that Rusty claims he didn’t see anybody near the dorm. I’ve come to the conclusion that he knows more than he’s telling. That he’s, for some reason, holding something back!”

“He may be,” speculated Bob, “May have stumbled onto some dope and may be planning to blossom out one of these days as a hero!”

“I don’t think that,” said Norma, taking issue, “To tell you the truth, I don’t know what to think. Lately—Anne must have told him something about the trouble we’ve been having because he’s insisted on escorting her places and I’m sure this has made Anne more nervous than ever.”

Bob stood up.

“Darn chilly sitting, isn’t it? Mind walking a little?”

“Not at all but I really hadn’t noticed the air. This wrap of Anne’s is so wonderfully warm.”

The two crossed the grass to the walk and followed along it beneath the light from an arc lamp.

“Well, what were you thinking I might be able to do?” asked Bob, “It seems to me that . . . !”

Crack!

The chill stillness of the night air was broken by a sharp report and then a zzzzzzzzzzzing! The whistling sound passed alarmingly close to the couple on the sidewalk.

Crack!

A second sharp report and a zzzzzzzing! which caused Norma to clutch her shoulder and cry out.

“Down! Quick!” ordered Bob, and pulled Norma from the glare of the light, pushing her prone on the grass beside a hedge. “Are you hit?”

“I—I hardly think so,” Norma gasped, “But I’m positive the bullet went through the wrap! . . . who on earth would . . . ?”

“That’s what I’d like to know!” replied Bob, hoarsely, “I’ll say Anne’s in danger! You were evidently mistaken for her in that wrap.”

“My heavens! That’s so! Take this thing off me, Bob. I don’t care if it is cold out. I wouldn’t wear this wrap again on a bet!”

Bob raised his head cautiously and peered about.

“Funny those shots haven’t aroused the campus. Suppose most everyone’s in bed and those who heard it figured the noise was the backfire of a car.”

The darkened campus with its clumps of trees, shrubbery and hedges afforded many splendid places from which to shoot in ambush. Surrounding it were college buildings and dormitories, the latter the only ones presenting any signs of life—an occasional lighted window telling the story of some student’s struggle to get up in back work or pass a much-feared exam.

“I think it’s safe to get up now,” decided Bob.

But as he spoke a figure suddenly stepped from behind a tree and advanced toward them. Norma, half-rising, caught sight of the man and suppressed a shriek. Perhaps the person approaching was a maniac! In that event he would kill mercilessly and without thought of consequences. The person who had terrorized them had taken crazy chances anyway. Norma shrank behind Bob. But as the figure drew

near so that the light caught the features, Bob exclaimed in surprise.

"Anne!" called a voice, anxiously.

"It's Rusty!" whispered Norma, clutching Bob's arm.

"Yes, I know," Bob replied in a low tone.

"Anne, are you hurt?"

"No!" Norma stood up. "And I'm not Anne."

The substitute fullback's face was a study.

"Why, Norma! How did I . . .? Oh, is that Anne's wrap you're wearing?"

Norma nodded.

Rusty laughed, dryly. "That explains it! I'd have sworn you were Anne. What's the idea—trying to fool somebody?"

The substitute fullback directed a suspicious glance at Bob.

"No indeed," assured Norma, "I was only going out for a few minutes and, as Anne's cloak was handy, she told me to slip it on."

"So that's it?" rejoined Rusty, with a meaningful smile, "Well, it's a good thing because the way it turned out, about the only person you'd have fooled would have been yourself."

Norma gave Bob a quick, consulting look.

“Why, what do you mean?” she retorted, with a show of resentment.

Rusty took his time in answering. “Just what I said. You’ve found out now how well somebody’s gotten Anne spotted. Which proves I haven’t been shadowing her the past week for nothing.”

Bob’s face flushed. “So that’s what you were doing tonight—following what you thought was Anne and me around?”

“Right!” admitted Rusty, frankly, “And it’s a lucky thing for you both that I did or you might have been bumped off. Look!”

The substitute fullback drew from his pocket a pearl-handled revolver.

“Oh!” cried Norma, shuddering.

“Even carry a gun?” guessed Bob, “You *are* prepared!”

“Naw!” denied Rusty, disgustedly, “This is the baby that was fired at you two.”

“Us *two*?” took up Bob, quickly.

“Well, you were both close together. It might have hit either of you,” the substitute fullback explained.

"A bullet did go through Anne's wrap," informed Norma, "See! Right here on the left shoulder!"

Rusty whistled, examining the coat with interest.

"Whew! Some narrow escape you had! That guy could shoot!"

"How did you get the gun?" Bob demanded, skeptically.

"I hit him from behind and knocked him spinning," Rusty answered, easily, "He dropped his gun. We both made a scramble for it and I got it. But before I could use it he beat it like a streak across the campus and disappeared between the two lab buildings."

Rusty broke the revolver open and exhibited the two spent bullets in a chamber containing four other unused shots.

Norma gasped.

"Why, Rusty, you took an awful chance. What if . . . ?"

The substitute fullback shrugged his shoulders, disparagingly.

"Where did this fellow shoot at us from?" asked Bob, eyeing Rusty shrewdly.

"From behind the three elms. He was sneak-

ing up to them while you were sitting there. Your getting up probably saved you. As you started to move away he fired . . . and I made a running dive." Rusty returned the revolver to his pocket. "This'll make a good piece of evidence," he added, patting the pocket, "I'm taking it down to the police."

"Then I'll leave it to you to report the matter," decided Bob, "I was just thinking of going down to headquarters myself."

"Better come along. I might not tell the story straight," said the substitute fullback, with a touch of sarcasm.

"I'm not worrying about that," Bob assured, "You deserve credit, Rusty, and you ought to get it."

"Who's looking for credit?" Rusty snapped, "I'm just trying to clear this thing up for Anne, that's all. The police don't seem to be getting anywhere. If they'd been on the lookout they could have picked this bird up easy. I spotted him hanging around Hadden House from my window. And when I saw him follow what looked like Anne and you . . . then I got busy."

"Well, I'm just as grateful to you as Anne

could ever be for doing what you did," declared Norma, "From what you say I don't doubt but that you may have saved my life."

"Forget it," returned the substitute fullback, "Tell Anne I'll have the police send a copper up here to patrol the grounds so she needn't be afraid of anything else happening tonight. I've got a fairly good idea of what this guy looks like now and I don't think it'll be long before he's caught."

"Thank you, Rusty.

"Oh, yes—and you might also tell her that this bird *isn't* the same one she introduced me to that night in the reception room. She'll know the one I mean."

Quite obviously Rusty was veiling this information that Bob might be kept in the dark. It had the effect of making the star fullback feel that he was a negligible factor in this suddenly very ardent business of protecting Anne. Rusty had gained a moment of superiority and he was enjoying it to the full. The attitude was irritating to say the least.

"I don't think a word should be said to Anne about this tonight," Bob spoke up, firmly, "She's wrought up enough as it is."

Rusty, in the act of departing, wheeled about.

“Say, since when are you sticking your nose into this? What do you know about this anyway?”

“Not much!” rejoined Bob, feelingly, “But I’m going to know plenty soon.”

“Oh, you are, are you? Well, if you know what’s good for you, you’d better keep hands off! Has Anne asked you to mix in her affairs?”

“Has she *you*?” Bob fired back, hotly.

“You bet she has!” was Rusty’s unexpected answer, “She’s taken me into her confidence and I’m going to see her through.”

“Is that true, Norma?” demanded Bob.

Between two fires, Anne’s room-mate, already unnerved by the series of happenings, begged to be left out of the argument.

“That’s a lie!” branded Bob, “You’re taking too much for granted, old boy! And all I’ve got to say is—watch *your* step!”

Fists clenched, eyes blazing, the rivals in football as well as for the attentions of a certain very popular girl, faced one another, on the brink of fighting. And, quite possibly, had it not been for the pleading presence of this

girl's chum, a clash long smoldering might have resulted. As it was, the star and the substitute restrained themselves after what appeared to have been a great effort and each went his separate way—Bob to escort Norma back to Hadden House and Rusty to police headquarters to report the mysterious shooting affair.

And that night four different people in Bartlett College slept fitfully with nightmarish wonderings of what the morrow might bring.

CHAPTER IX

RUSTY SCORES A TRIUMPH

“BRING on this Bob Delano person! We’ll show him no one-man-team can take us over!”

This and other shouts of defiance rode into Bartlett on the crest of a Great Western rooting wave with the morning of the day for the game—the last scheduled home game of the year. Of all elevens thus far to face Bartlett, Great Western was accorded by eminent sporting authorities the best chances of coming away with a win. Great Western had lost but one game and this early in the season before the team had completely hit its stride. Since then many of the country’s powerful elevens had fallen under Great Western’s driving blows as giant trees beneath the woodcutter’s axe.

“And we’re going to stick a nice little pin in Bartlett’s national championship balloon!” predicted an ardent Great Western rooter. “What it takes to stop Delano we’ve got—a stronger line than Bartlett! Stop Bartlett’s

line from smashing through and their galloping ghost isn't going to get out into the open field. If he can't get that far he might as well be sitting on the bench. Watch today, how our system works!"

Bartlett supporters, entertaining a wholesome respect for Great Western, wisely held their opinions in check, preferring to await the outcome of the game before committing themselves to any wild outburst. Moreover, a tension was commencing to be felt by the Bartlett team as well as fans for the eleven had been compelled to maintain a high standard of play throughout a schedule containing few soft spots.

"It's been a tough grind keeping my throat in condition for split-tonsil yelling, week after week," bemoaned one fan, "Every game the yell leaders tell us we've got to yell louder than before and I'm afraid, by the end of the season, I'll have muscles on my tonsils so large that my neck will bulge like a goiter!"

In the Bartlett locker room before the game the attitude of tenseness was personified in taut nerves. Team-mates figuratively took each others' heads off over trifles; some raved over

the breaking of a shoestring or the losing of a sock. Rusty Milburn, in particular, broke the catch on his locker door because it stuck when he tried to open it.

“Either Great Western gets annihilated today or we get walloped,” prophesied Slim Tyler, right end, “We’re in the mood for both!”

From the opening whistle Bartlett played indifferent football. Neither the line nor the backfield could seem to get going. And Great Western, true to predictions, started stopping the far-famed Bob Delano practically in his tracks.

“Ah! That’s what I’ve been waiting to see all season!” declared the substitute fullback, experiencing grim delight at Bob’s failure.

“Who is this guy Delano?” the Great Western fans began yelling.

“Never heard of him!” others gleefully answered as Bob was nailed for a three yard loss and Bartlett was forced to punt.

Great Western had a touchdown by the end of the first quarter and was strongly headed toward another when Coach Edwards, in desperation, sought to shock his first team into playing

form by yanking them and sending in the entire second eleven with the exception of quarterback Chapin. Such a change seemed suicidal in the face of a team of Great Western's calibre but the Bartlett seconds, impressed with their great responsibility, called forth a fighting sprint which took the ball away from their opponents on downs and carried it to within fifteen yards of Great Western's goal where, unable to gain further, quarterback Chapin called upon one Rusty Milburn for an attempt at a field goal.

"YEA!" screamed the Bartlett stands as Rusty made good with a perfect kick from placement, the ball whizzing between the uprights, just skimming the bar.

"Good boy, Rus! That's showing 'em!" commended his room-mate, Crutch Edgecombe, "Keep her up!"

The substitute fullback glanced exultantly toward a spot in the stands in which he knew a certain young lady to be sitting. His name was on the lips of everyone in the Bowl. There was coming to him, finally, the acclaim to which he had felt himself long entitled. And, ironically enough, his steady ground-gaining had

been accomplished behind the second team line! Let the much vaunted star fullback put this in his pipe and smoke it!

The first half ended with Great Western in the lead, 7 to 3.

Between halves the Bartlett locker room took on the properties of a furnace room as Coach Bruce Edwards fired the air by charging his first team members with going stale.

"You were rotten!" he rasped, "Took the seconds to show you how to play football! Just because you've trimmed some of the best teams in the country is no sign that others are going to roll over and play dead! I'm sending you back this third quarter and if you don't show something, out you come, every last man of you!"

In the stands a certain young lady made some warm remarks about Bartlett's substitute fullback, but these remarks were inspired by the warmth of admiration rather than the torrid heat of disgust.

"I've never seen Rusty do so well," Anne declared, "You know, Norma, it may be as he's always said—if he'd just had more chances . . .!"

"Maybe so," admitted Norma, slowly, "Still, you'll never get me to believe he can hold a candle to Bob."

"He's holding more than that today!" rejoined Anne, teasingly.

"Ah, yes, dearie!" jollied Norma, "So far! But, don't forget, there's the last half yet to play!"

Bartlett's complete and serene confidence in her triple threat star was indicated by the tremendous ovation Bob Delano received on re-entering the game at the start of the third quarter. He, with other members of the first team, was burning with the desire to show Coach Edwards something. They were fresh from having received the prize tongue-lashing of the season. This, coupled with the fine performance of the reserves, had carried a whip-like sting. But all would be forgiven and forgotten with a dashing return to form.

"Let's go, Bartlett!" intreated the fans.

And if ever an eleven tried to get going, Bartlett did. But there was such a thing as trying too hard. Several penalties were meted out because of linesmen breaking before the ball was snapped back. This, more than any-

thing else, gave evidence that Bartlett's usual precision was lacking. Great Western had caught what was ordinarily a wonderful football machine on a distinctly off day. And when Bob, after twice failing to advance the ball, dropped back to punt, Bartlett rooters gazed at one another dolefully.

"Doesn't look so good," admitted one rooter, worriedly.

Defensively, however, Bartlett was saving her face by holding Great Western in check. The battle thus resolved itself into an exchange of punts after ineffectual efforts of both sides to gain consistently.

"Tight game at that!" said another rooter with the third quarter almost over, "Anything can happen yet."

And, at the start of the fourth quarter it did! Great Western had finally battled to Bartlett's thirty yard line and attempted a forward pass on the last down which Bob Delano intercepted. He was off like the wind, zigzagging and picking up a good interference as he ran with the stands shouting him on. He was going at last—out in the open field—his old familiar self . . . the blue jersey bearing the numeral

“44” dodging, twisting, changing pace, reversing its field. On the Bartlett bench second team players bellowed their encouragement.

“Atta boy, Bob! Touchdown!”

“The lucky stiff!” mumbled the substitute fullback, glumly, “He always seems to get a break . . . after Great Western’s stopping him cold, too!”

But the star fullback was making his own breaks now just as he had always been called upon to do after team-mates had gotten him through opposing lines into the open. Quick, highly timed shifting of the hips tossed tacklers off him as though some force had thrown them bodily. Others he evaded by straight-arming or dodging.

“Look at him go!” shrieked the stands, and groaned when Bob was forced out of bounds on Great Western’s twenty-four yard line after the longest run of the game.

“What did I tell you?” cried Norma, overjoyed.

“Marvelous!” conceded Anne, “They’re *both* wonderful!”

“Anne, you’re getting just too tactful these days,” chided her room-mate, “Why don’t you

make up your mind and then one of them might go with me as consolation.”

Anne laughed. But the situation between Bob and Rusty *was* rapidly growing difficult. Norma's recital of their near clash the night of the shooting had given Anne a hint of how careful she would have to be in receiving the attentions of either. Why couldn't fellows go with a girl and remain good friends? She enjoyed the company of both and both had been wonderfully nice to her. In fact, that was just the trouble. Each wanted to be nice to the exclusion of the other!

“Hold 'em, Great Western! Hold 'em!” boomed the visiting fans.

And how their team did hold! Bartlett tried two end runs, one of them with number “44” carrying the ball. Net result—two yards! A pass by Bob was grounded.

“Fourth down! Eight yards to go!”

A double pass behind the line with left half Ed Raymond on the receiving end. A mad shriek from the crowd.

“Did they make it?”

The distance was measured and the referee's arm seen to wave.

“She’s over!”

A first down on Great Western’s fourteen yard mark! Quarterback Chapin was applauded for his crafty calling of a play which produced the needed yardage. Ordinarily Delano would have been depended upon but Great Western seemed actually to have worked out a system which stopped him.

“First time this year Bob hasn’t been able to get away from scrimmage,” remarked a statistically inclined fan, “Look at that. They dropped him for a one yard loss that time!”

Had it not been for Bob’s reputation and the ever-present possibility of his breaking loose on the very next play, the stands would no doubt have commenced shouting for his removal. Instead he was exhorted the more to come through. Stew Anderson, right half, picked up four yards. Again Bob was given the pigskin. The Bartlett line wavered and broke. Enemy arms reached out and down went the fullback. A two yard loss this time.

“Rusty! Go in for Bob!”

Coach Bruce Edwards was a man of quick decision. Great Western’s concentration upon the star fullback had accomplished more than

any other eleven. For some reason Bob just could not get going. His failure to gain appreciably was jeopardizing the team's advance at a time when a touchdown was sorely needed. The last quarter was slipping.

The substitute fullback raced out on the field and reported to the referee. Right tackle Crutch Edgecombe, his room-mate, slapped him on the shoulder as he jogged behind the line. With the stands sitting in stunned surprise, Bob, head hanging, bitterly disappointed, brushed past Rusty unseeing. As he left the field the stands arose loyally to cheer him. He had not failed them many times, and he had not completely failed them now for Bartlett's desperate bid for a touchdown was due to his marvelous forty-six yard run.

But a new hero was being poured into his shoes today! With a last down requiring nine yards, Rusty—on a fake pass—skirted right end for eleven yards and all Bartlett went crazy!

“First down, Bartlett. Goal to make!”

The goal only two yards distant! Big Jim Baker opened up a hole and an aroused Rusty plunged into it. One yard more! The ball went

to Stew Anderson. No gain! Great Western bracing frenziedly.

"Give it to Rusty!" cried a Bartlett rooter.

Anne, white-lipped, chewed at the corner of her handkerchief. On the Bartlett bench the star fullback made a megaphone of his hands.

"Take her over, Rusty! . . ."

Bartlett couldn't . . . mustn't lose. She was fighting for more than today's game. Fighting for the right to meet the mighty Pennington eleven, undefeated, with the chance for the national title. If Rusty could do what he had failed to do—more power to him!

"YEA!" The Bartlett stands shot to their feet as the substitute fullback dove through the Great Western line and over the goal. With the field a delirium of sound he missed the try for point after touchdown when an attempted drop kick went wild.

"But we're ahead—nine to seven!" cried a wild-eyed Bartlett rooter, "Whoopee!"

And Bartlett, once ahead, took infinite pains to stay ahead. The game ended with the ball in Great Western's possession at midfield with the visitors vainly trying to connect with frenzied forward passes in a last minute effort

to snatch back a victory they had all but figured in the bag.

On his way off the field, arms uplifted to shield him from the joyous pummelings of team-mates, Bartlett's lion of the hour found a chance to slip an arm affectionately about the shoulders of his player room-mate.

"Rusty, old boy, you sure showed 'em to-day!" Crutch shouted in his ear, "Didn't I tell you . . .?"

Rusty nodded, eyes gleaming. Yes, and not only that! To his way of thinking, nothing he could have done could possibly have hurt Bob more. A pretty good method of evening scores! This showing ought to put him in line for service in the Pennington game, too. At least Coach Edwards would no longer have reason to be backward about sending him in. He'd at last had a chance to fight his way out from the almost total eclipse of Bartlett's dazzling star and do a little shining for himself!

A moment later Crutch and Rusty were torn apart when Bartlett rooters, rushing onto the field, lifted the substitute fullback atop their shoulders and insisted on parading him about the Bowl.

CHAPTER X

A PLAYWRIGHT HAS HIS TROUBLES

UPON billboards, telephone poles, sides of buildings and all other available spaces about the campus, the town of Bartlett and surrounding country—posters and placards announcing the Dramatic Club's Annual Play made a startling over-night appearance.

A zealous exploitation manager, selected on the score of his imagination, had done himself proud, as witness the following:

The Bartlett Dramatic Club
Presents
"MONEY TO BURN!"
A Scorching Play
Of Americans in France
By B. G. Turner
NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 26th
At the Bartlett Little Theatre

The poster had a colored background picturing a pile of American money on fire, encircled by a sea of American faces, various types from the girl in the cabaret to the newly-rich social

climber to the "over-the-top" doughboy. The illustration fairly reeked of melodrama and beckoned an enticing finger to all who loved emotional thrills.

"A Play that Strikes Deep at the Heart of International Problems," was a line which the publicity writer hoped would hit the "intelligentsia" although he admitted that ordinary theatre-goers wouldn't care a whoop about that.

"What most theatre-goers want is good old-fashioned hokum spread on thick," said P. Cornelius Blossom, the exploitation manager in person, "And 'Money to Burn' is chock full of it! If this isn't a hit then there's no truth in advertising!"

But all hail to the power of publicity! When the Bartlett Little Theatre opened its advance sale at ten o'clock in the morning, two days before the date of the show, a crowd of eager buyers stretched a block and a half long, bravely enduring a drizzling rain to secure seats in the "fifth row, center."

Buzz Turner, budding playwright, stood plastered against the wall out of sight in the narrow box office and watched, with widening

eyes, the fast disappearing pasteboards covering the "lower floor" plot.

"My gosh!" he said, "We ought to make a commercial thing of this and run her a week!"

"Not with me at this window!" panted the perspiring ticket seller, "Haven't you got anything less than a twenty, Madam? . . . Where the heck do these women get all this money? Certainly not from their husbands! No, nothing more in the fifth row, Madam! . . . There's the board—you can see for yourself! . . . No, Ma'am, we didn't pull a ticket. First come, first served. Everything's been sold since the window opened . . . Well, do you want these four in the eighteenth row or not? . . . All right, here's your change! . . . Whew!"

Buzz wiped perspiration from his own brow.

"Boy, I'm glad I'm only the author!" he exclaimed, "Sorry to have caused you all this trouble!"

"Oh, that's all right. If it hadn't been you it would have been some other nut!"

How the customers kept coming up and how the rain kept coming down! And finally the

ticket seller, with a sigh of relief, detached the "downstairs" board from the wall.

"Nothing left but the Sahara desert," he remarked, "Now to clean up the velvet!"

He pointed to the balcony plot which was fairly well eaten into.

"What do you mean 'velvet'?" asked Buzz.

"Some folks call it 'easy street'," explained the ticket seller, "The downstairs is always toughest to sell and a 'hit' show is one that clears out the balcony. . . . No, sir, sold out downstairs! . . . seventh row, balcony . . . no, not dead center . . . three seats off . . . anything closer on the side? . . . yes, four, second row . . . all the way over! Good view? Perfect! Every seat's a good seat, Mister. Behind a post? . . . Well, can't you move your head? . . ."

Buzz waited around ten minutes more, fascinated at the way tickets moved. And think of it! These tickets were being sold to *his* show! Two more nights and the curtain would be going up on "Money to Burn" before a packed house. And he'd be in the wings with nervous palpitation of the heart. A chill ran up and down his spine at the thought of it. And to-

morrow night was dress rehearsal and the cast had been doing worse than rotten! Edwina Perry, especially. She was screamingly funny all right, just as he had anticipated, but she just couldn't seem to remember lines. Or, if she did remember them she remembered them in the wrong place. She had never lacked for words, however. "Fortunately for me," she had blithely explained, "I can ad lib indefinitely, so none of you need to worry because if I can only remember the idea I can keep talking about it until the right line comes." There was no doubt about that. She had demonstrated this marvelous gift more than once and Bob had remarked that, if she did it the night of the play she'd "stop the show." To which Buzz had added, privately, "Yes, in more ways than one!"

The ticket seller broke in upon the playwright's ice box of thoughts by the cheerful news that "in another five minutes we'll be hanging out the S. R. O. sign!"

"What's that mean—'Sold Right Off'?" guessed Buzz.

The ticket seller laughed.

"Say, I hope you know more about play writ-

ing than you do about ticket selling. That means 'Standing Room Only'!"

"Oh, yes, I've heard of that, too," grinned Buzz, sheepishly, "Well, it looks like you're doing as well as can be expected so I think I'll drop backstage and see how much paint the scenic artist is smearing over things that shouldn't be painted."

"Go ahead," was the rejoinder, "And here's hoping 'Money to Burn' is worth the money in this till!"

The very important dress rehearsal was called for the early evening hour of seven o'clock. It was called at this hour for the simple reason that whatever time the players arrived, an hour at least would be taken with their dressing and make-up. And midnight had a habit of rolling around at dress rehearsals before the second act was run through, thus causing much wailing and gnashing of teeth.

"All right, folks!" addressed Buzz, when the cast was finally ready to go on, "We're going through this play tonight just as we're going to do it tomorrow. That is, unless some of you make mistakes. But tonight, for the first time,

we're putting in all the business. That means, where a kiss is indicated, you do it . . ."

"Wow!" someone remarked, with evident interest.

"Everybody ready?" asked Buzz, ignoring the outburst of enthusiasm, "Then I'm going out front. Joe, give us the footlights, please. Remember, you people, this is your last chance to get up in any lines you don't feel sure of, so study over your sides while you're waiting to go on, will you?"

The playwright received a nodding assurance as he left the stage and felt his way through an exit to a box and from there down to the orchestra floor. Seating himself in the fifth row on the aisle, he clapped his hands as a signal.

"First act curtain!"

Dramatic Club committeemen, headed by President Harry Seymour, tiptoed in and took seats quietly in the rear. The zero hour of rehearsing had arrived!

The curtain arose upon a French interior, the parlor-office of the Tout Va Bien Hotel, Latin Quarter, Paris, with Edwina Perry in the role of Gwendolyn Murfee, "discovered"

reading a copy of the Paris Herald and puffing nonchalantly upon a cigarette. At least the script said that she should be puffing nonchalantly.

"Great atmosphere right at the start!" whispered one of the committeemen.

"That isn't atmosphere, you boob! That's cigarette smoke!" replied one of the more critical.

'Thoughtlessly,' according to the script, 'Gwendolyn, seeing something in the paper which interests her, places the cigarette upon the edge of the table.' This piece of business Edwina quite obviously did—*thoughtfully*. She looked up to make sure that the cigarette was placed just so.

Director Buzz Turner leaped to his feet.

"No, no, Miss Perry! Excuse me but I've told you time and again *not* to look up when you lay your cigarette down! You kill that piece of business every time you do it!"

"But I'm so afraid I'll drop it on the floor!" protested Edwina, "And then, what in the world would Lulu do when she enters and is expected to pick it off the table?"

"Worry about that when it happens!"

ordered the director, "Now, repeat, please!"

And so the rehearsal went, first one thing wrong and then another, until Buzz, in despair, let the play go on, calling only the most glaring of atrocities.

Came the love scene between Anne and Rusty in the respective roles of Pauline Tochard and Jacques Brugnon. The scene called for great emotion on the part of the French lover, a shell-shocked war veteran made desperate by the thought that Donald Williams, the former American doughboy, had won Pauline away from him. This scene preceded the dramatic climax of the second act where Jacques, enraged at Pauline's refusal of him, arouses the French peasants against Donald by charging that he has been trying to buy the girl with American money. Jacques refers to a loan of ten thousand francs made Pauline's father by Donald which Proprietor Rene Tochard is unable to repay.

"So ze American, he take my Pauline!" Jacques then cries, losing his head completely at this juncture and attacking Donald, urged on by the excited mob. It is here that Henri Tochard, Pauline's brother, who has served

side by side with Donald during the war, enters the fray and prevents his fellow Frenchman from killing the American by himself taking the death wound.

"From here on it ought to be good," remarked a committeeman, hopefully, as the players entered the love scene.

"Great drama there if they can only get it out," opined President Seymour, his faith in the play unshaken.

But groans arose as Rusty, with 'business' directing him to 'seize Pauline madly in his arms,' mildly placed an arm about her.

"Great grief!" cried a critic, "It's a good thing he doesn't tackle that way!"

"Here, here! That'll never do!" objected Director Turner, adding more gray hairs, "You're supposed to be insanely in love with her, man! . . . She's not your grandmother! Let's see a real clinch!"

Several of the cast, looking on from the wings, snickered. Anne's face flushed. The substitute fullback shifted his feet awkwardly.

"But I'm afraid I might hurt her," he explained, weakly.

"Go ahead!" ordered the playwright, "I'll

pay for all broken ribs! But act like you mean it!"

Anne looked a bit apprehensive at this and Rusty grinned.

"Shall we try it again?" he asked.

"I don't know!" Anne rejoined, as all laughed.

The director snapped his fingers in exasperation.

"Please! Everybody! This is no laughing matter! Hold your mood, you two! You've got to get this right!"

Soberly, both somewhat embarrassed, Anne and Rusty renewed their scene. But when the big moment arrived, Rusty's self-consciousness again defeated him. He grabbed Anne this time by the shoulders and drew her toward him but the action was so stiffly and clumsily done that lookers-on could not refrain from audible sounds of amusement. Buzz, however, registered deep disgust.

Leaping up over the footlights onto the stage he stepped into Rusty's role.

"Miss Morgan, with your permission, I'd like to show Mr. Milburn how this should be done!"

Anne acquiesced with a little bow, a blush stealing through her make-up.

"No, no, Pauline!" took up the director and playwright, speaking Rusty's lines, "You do love me! You do! . . . This Donald! . . . He no good American! . . . I keel him!"

"Jacques!" implored the beautiful Pauline, registering terror as the author of the play approached her.

And let it be said to Buzz's everlasting credit that he lived the part of his characters. Naturally timid and shy in the presence of the opposite sex, Buzz, through the role of Jacques, overcame any and all inhibitions. He swept Pauline into his arms with a violence which left her so breathless she could scarcely speak her next lines . . . and, as the script directed, implanted three 'passionate kisses' upon her 'resisting lips.'

"Bravo!" applauded the small audience in the house.

The face of Bob who, as Donald Williams, was watching from the wings, presented a study. He wasn't so sure that he liked the love scene, something telling him that his

scene with Anne was tame compared to this.

"All right!" snapped Buzz, stepping down off the stage into a box and from there back to his seat. "Perhaps you can improve on it but, at any rate, that's the idea!"

"If he improves on that he'll have to go some," a voice opined.

To which another voice added an enthusiastic, "You said it!"

"Say, if I hear any more remarks I'll throw everybody out of here except the cast!" threatened the director, distractedly, "You folks realize that tomorrow night this show's got to go on?"

This suggestion had a sobering effect, and the substitute fullback, irritated by the fun enjoyed at his expense, set himself to the task of playing the scene as he had seen it demonstrated. On this occasion, however, he went to the opposite extreme, seizing Anne so madly that it brought forth a shriek.

"Much better!" complimented Buzz, "That scream sounded fine. Put that in after this! Now kiss her!"

Rusty did so—the action arousing new groans.

“What do you think you’re playing—Captain John Smith?” demanded the playwright, “I can’t do a John Alden for you every few minutes! Forget that you’re Rusty Milburn. You’re Jacques Brugnon, a highly excitable, hot-blooded Frenchman! The girl you love, you’re losing to another! You intend to have her! She’s resisting you but you are going to kiss her! . . . You *do* kiss her! . . . Again! . . . Once more! . . . Fine! . . . GREAT!”

Under the stimulus of Buzz’s directing chatter, Rusty finally became engrossed in the part and played the scene as it should be played. He was greeted by tremendous applause.

“Now—once more!” ordered Buzz, “To make sure you’ve got it!”

“Oh!” gasped Anne, laughingly.

Bob ran fingers under his collar and turned uneasily to Lee Summers who had been looking on amusedly.

“Gee, if they play that tomorrow night the way they did just now, they’ll get a great hand!” said Lee, who was taking the part of Claude Murfee, Gwendolyn’s ‘sap’ of a brother.

“Yes, but it seems to me Buzz is working

them too hard," complained Bob, "Anne looks tired already and there's the third act still coming up."

"Well, you can cut some of that," geyed Lee, "Especially your love scene. That won't need rehearsing."

Finally satisfied, the author-director gave the word for Rusty and Anne to lead into the big climax of the play. This scene was the most unwieldy of all for it involved the tensest of acting against a mob background . . . peasants crowding into the hotel and hurling threats at "Ze bad American!" all of which had to be carefully timed. And then, the fight between Jacques and Donald. It must be realistically staged. Buzz's stiff collar was wilted and his voice was gone before this scene received his okay . . . and as for the time—past midnight!

"Third act curtain!" he called, hoarsely.

"You slave driver!" said some one of the girls whose nerves were near the breaking point.

"But we've got to go through this!" protested Buzz, "It's our last chance . . .

and, I hate to say it, folks, but you're terrible! Simply terrible!"

This tactless break from a director, himself near the blowing up point, increased a gloom which it seemed one could already cut with a knife.

"Cheer up!" called President Seymour, assuming the role of peace-maker, "This act only runs twenty minutes!"

"Which means we'll be here till two o'clock," said some other voice which could not be identified.

But Director Turner, with a gesture of resignation, excused much that he felt needed punching up and permitted the act to play through with scarcely an interruption. He paid exacting attention, however, to the last scene in the play—the 'tender' love scene between the American and his French sweetheart. But Anne and Bob, both desiring to avoid a repetition of the other love scene, went through this scene so devotedly the first time that Buzz, looking upon their performance as the one bright spot in a miserably disappointing evening, leaped to his feet with shouts of joy.

"Now that's the way to make love!" he commended.

But Bob, at his first opportunity, took Buzz privately to task. "What do you mean?" he kidded, "Giving Rusty all that time on *his* love scene? I can see now I pulled a bonehead. I should have fizzled a couple of times so as to get to do the scene over!"

The playwright-director, however, was in no mood to be kidded. He fairly staggered across the campus in company with his room-mate and consoling members of the Dramatic Club committee.

"It wasn't so terrible," offered President Seymour, "I've seen rottener dress rehearsals than this!"

"Did you cancel the show?" asked Buzz, incredulously.

"No, we went on and played it and it went over great!" replied the president. "Say, if a dress rehearsal's no good it's a sure sign the show's going to be a knockout."

"No doubt," agreed the author, dismally, "I'll be lucky to come to in a week. I've half a notion to hang myself now. I would if I had a pair of suspenders."

"What you need is a good hot bath and a sound sleep," prescribed P. Cornelius Blossom, exploitation manager, "You've done wonders with that cast, old man. You don't need to worry. It's all over now!"

"Yes—all over but the lemons and rotten eggs," affirmed Buzz, "Believe me, if they start hollering 'Author! Author!' I'll never show up on that stage! I'll head for parts unknown. You'd better tell the doorman first thing tomorrow not to let anyone in with baskets or paper sacks or bulging pockets. Oh, why did I ever have to write a play?"

Even after Buzz had reached the quiet confines of his room, the horrors of the dress rehearsal persisted, causing him to explode again and again.

"Oh, what a headache!" he groaned.

"*You* should have a headache!" retorted Bob, unmasking his own feelings, "Think of me! Anne let Rusty take her home tonight!"

This was the straw that broke the playwright's back. He toppled over on his bed and lay motionless.

"Ain't we got troubles?" he grinned, "Gosh,

I'm tired! Going to sleep with my clothes on!"

And he did. But Bob, after retiring, lay awake, wide-eyed and staring. And when he finally dropped asleep it was to dream of a villain seizing a girl in his arms and kissing her passionately only to have a voice keep saying, 'That's terrible! Kiss her as though you meant it! Do it again! . . . Once more! . . . Again!' For some reason, though his muscles twitched to get at the villain, his dream would not permit him to move. And this, to Bob, was the greatest agony of all.

CHAPTER XI

AN UNHAPPY ENDING

THE two most gala occasions of the year in Bartlett College were the long celebrated Grid Club Party and the Dramatic Club's Annual Play. Both events were auspicious enough for evening dress suits to be reclaimed from hock or shaken loose from moth balls. In the case of the girls it usually meant new dresses but even these were reckoned well worth the cost. To have been invited to attend either of these functions and to have been forced to decline for want of clothes was to suffer a fate comparable to that of Cinderella, although many needed the good witch touch of parental pocketbooks to make the grade. In other words, these two outstanding affairs represented the high water mark of Bartlett's 'putting on the dog.' At such rare times as these there was quite a thrill to be found in formality. Not that the ball room floor or the theatre resounded with high-pitched "Don't you knows" and "Really, old

deahs'' but nevertheless a quality of reserve was maintained which lent dignity to the gatherings.

A fellow, desiring to do the thing up right, was required to send the young lady flowers and to call for her and take her home in a taxi, scorning whatever figures appeared on the taxi meter. Then there was the dinner, either before or after, with light refreshments sprinkled in between acts or dances, whichever the event might be . . . not to mention the cost of the event itself. These small items of expense led the Bartlett Scream, advertised as "A Weakly Comic Sheet," to proclaim that "in place of earning their way through college, most students strove mightily to earn their way through these two occasions."

Bowing to custom though feeling far from comfortable, the playwright and director of "Money To Burn!" struggled inside an evening dress suit which he had rented. The fit was good except that the trousers were a trifle long, giving them a tendency to bag at the knees. Buzz Turner's greatest complaint, however, was regarding the wing collar which he just couldn't manage to attach.

"I ought to have a personal property man or a valet," he muttered, "This business of surrounding your neck with a collar is no one-man job. Here Bob, lend me a hand. I'm due at that theatre now!"

The star fullback stepped over, obligingly. He gripped the collar firmly, gave it a pull and then squeezed in on his room-mate's neck, causing Buzz to cough.

"Hey! You're choking me!"

"Can't help it, your Adam's apple's too large!"

"Well, what can I do about that?"

"I don't know. Do you suppose you could keep from swallowing for a couple hours?"

"Gosh, no!"

"Then I don't believe I can help you. When your Adam's apple's up I can just catch the collar but I'm afraid to snap it for fear when you swallow, the collar will fly off and throw me against the wall. Trouble is—your collar's too darn small!"

"You think so?" asked the playwright gravely, "It's the only one I've got . . . and there aren't any stores open!"

"Looks like you'd have to wear one of mine,"

suggested Bob, going to his dresser drawer and rummaging in it. "Here! How big is your neck anyway?"

"Well, the last stiff collar I wore was a fourteen so I naturally figured . . ."

"Oh, then—this'll fit you fine!"

"What size is it?"

"Fifteen and a half!"

"Murder! I could wind that around my neck like a puttee!"

The star fullback laughed. "Aw, not as bad as that. The style now-a-days is the wide open, roomy collar anyway. Collars patterned after great celebrities. This'll give you the perfect Buster Keaton stare!"

Bob snapped the collar in place as Buzz groaned.

"Say, if just a few more things could go haywire! Mind tying the bow tie while you're about it? This collar's loose all right. I hope my head doesn't slip through it."

"Boy, if this play turns out the way you were feeling last night, it may be a darn good thing," suggested the leading man, "When they soak the eggs and lemons you can just duck your head down inside your shirt!"

Buzz grinned, taking a playful poke at his room-mate.

“Listen, Bob. Honest, now—aren’t you even nervous? I feel like I was going to have indigestion in several places. If I live through this ordeal I’ll be lucky. Every once and awhile a knee gives out from under me. I’m so shaky right now that if I tried to sign my name it would look like the seismograph record of an earthquake.”

The star fullback slapped Buzz reassuringly on the back.

“Now cut that worry, partner. Your business, as author and director, is to radiate confidence.”

“After what I saw last night?” moaned Buzz, “Of course I hope for the best. But so do doctors when their patients are dying.”

“Feel my pulse!” commanded Bob, “Strong and regular, isn’t it? That’s how much your leading man is worrying about what he’s going to do tonight! Of course I feel on edge, but that’s nothing! I feel the same way before every football game. And take it from me, dress rehearsal thrown in, I’ve a hunch when we buck up against that old audience we’re

going right through 'em for a touchdown!"

"If your hunch turns out I'll buy you your next spring's straw hat," promised Buzz, taking a quick look at himself in the mirror. "Ye Gods! That collar! But it'll have to do now. It's six-thirty already and they light up the house at seven. I promised Edwina I'd meet her a half hour before time to run through a couple of her toughest scenes with her. Bye, bye! See you later!"

And the now more perspiring than aspiring playwright hastened out, slamming the door.

"Poor guy!" sympathized Bob, looking after him from the window, "If there's a wilder experience than training a bunch of us nuts to act in a play, then I don't know what it is! On the basis of his labors he deserves the Pulitzer Prize!"

Down in the stuffy dressing rooms underneath the stage, three-quarters of an hour before first curtain call, the principals and supers of the "Money To Burn" company, went about the business of make-up and dressing, keeping up a running fire of excited comment the while. No one but the cast and those directly connected with the production were allowed below

and it was jammed as it was. The jam was caused by the number of supers used in the mob scene at the end of the second act. These supers, able to take their own sweet time about getting ready, crowded about the rooms of the principals, engaging them in conversation and balling up things in general.

Director Turner, trying to make his way about, was finally forced to use extreme measures.

“See here, you folks! We can’t have this blocking up the entrances and getting in everyone’s way. Time’s too short. You supers take those rooms marked ‘Chorus Girls’ and ‘Chorus Boys’ and stay there till your call comes. I know you’ll feel like herded cattle but we’re all cramped and it’s the best we can do. Come on! Move! Be good sports! . . .” The mob gave way slowly and protestingly as Director Turner pushed those nearest him back from dressing room doors. “Whew! It’s hot down here! . . . Wonder if the guy who built this theatre figured actors could live without air? . . . Much obliged, everybody!”

With the congestion problem solved, Buzz, a

hundred and one things on his mind, was called to Miss Perry's dressing room by a loud wail.

"What's the matter, Edwina?" asked the director, anxiously, as his comedienne met him at the door.

"The light bulb's burned out!" she cried, "What'll I do?"

"Stay right there. I'll get you another!"

But light bulbs were as scarce as uncracked mirrors. There was one in the narrow hall at the foot of the precipitous descent of the stairs and one in each of the dressing rooms. Obviously none of these could be removed for transference elsewhere and the harried director was forced to go back stage in search of the electrician who took a bulb from the footlights and went below to remedy the local darkness.

"Oh, thank you!" beamed Edwina, and disappeared within where, above the general hubbub, Director Turner could hear her going over her lines.

"Suffering cats! Isn't she sure of those lines yet?" he groaned.

"Mr. Turner! . . . Mr. Turner!"

It was Betty Kaufman this time, the little girl who was playing Lulu, the maid. She

danced out into the hall half-dressed, eyes wide with fright. Inquiring heads poked from neighboring dressing rooms.

“What is it? What’s the matter?”

“There’s a mouse in my room!”

“Oh, no! Impossible!”

“Yes there is. It ran right out of an old hat box in the corner!”

“But you’re not afraid of a little thing like a mouse!”

“Oh, yes, I am! . . . They simply paralyze me!”

There was nothing for Director Turner to do but turn mouse chaser. He entered the dressing room boldly and approached the hat box as Miss Kaufman looked on from the doorway, biting the ends of her fingers, nervously. The instant Buzz stooped and moved the box, a tiny black shadow shot across the floor toward the door.

“Ooooooh!”

Miss Kaufman leaped high in the air as the trifling shadow passed beneath her and out into the hall. Other dressing room doors banged shut at sounding of the alarm and the poor, terrified mouse looking desperately for a place

of escape, finally disappeared through a knot hole at the end of the hall. Meanwhile Director Turner was almost in need of applying restoratives to his character, Lulu.

"Oh, I just know I won't be able to go on to-night," she cried, as he led her to a chair, "This theatre's over-run with those pesky things! Positively over-run!"

"Nonsense! That's the only one I've seen," reassured the Director, "You just saw the same one twice and multiplied it by twelve. Mice can't hurt anybody. Why, lots of folks feed them cheese."

"You don't mean it?" Miss Kaufman looked interested. Then, rebukingly, "Oh, aren't you funny?"

Her spunk once aroused, Director Turner knew that she would be too peeved at him to think of being frightened by a mouse, so he departed post haste, asking himself dolefully, "What next?"

As if in answer to the question, came the cry. "Mr. Turner! . . . Where's Mr. Turner?"

"Here!" called Buzz, being secretly glad

that his collar was a size too large which saved it from being an incoherent mass.

"You're wanted upstairs," informed Ralph Henry, stage manager, "What's the matter, man? You look worn to a frazzle!"

"Me? Never felt better in my life! Ha! Ha! . . . Who wants me? What's the trouble up there?"

"Nothing much. The stagehand in charge of the curtain just lost that slip you gave him with the cues on for when to drop it. Then President Seymour wants to see you about the club's presenting you with a loving cup between acts!"

The playwright-director put a hand to his throbbing head.

"Oh, he does! They'll have a fat chance getting me out there before that crowd! Where's the master copy of the script . . . the one you're to do the prompting from? I'll make out a new slip of cues for that dumb stagehand!"

"That's another thing I wanted to see you about," recalled the stage manager, "Didn't you have the script last? I can't find it!"

"Oh, my gosh!" Buzz fairly reeled. "Why should I have it? I've always left it with you. I told you to protect it with your life . . . that you alone were responsible for it."

"I know," admitted the stage manager, "And I put it away in the usual place, inside the drawer of the desk on the set. But when I went to look for it, it was gone . . . and I naturally supposed . . ."

"Come on!" cried the director, frantically, "We've got to find that p.d.q.!"

"Wait a minute!" called Mr. Henry, consulting his wrist watch, "It's fifteen minutes before the first curtain. Shall I give 'em their fifteen minutes' notice?"

Buzz gasped.

"What? . . . That all the time there's left? . . . By all means! . . . Let's see! . . . What have I . . . ?!"

"Fifteen minutes, everybody!" shouted the stage manager, "Snap it up!"

An excited flurry followed, during which a bulging-eyed director dashed up the steep stairs to the stage, trampling on his over-long trouser legs at every step.

Bob's dressing room was located directly across the hall from Anne's, and Rusty's, next door, opposite the room occupied by Edwina. Shortly after the curtain warning, the character of Donald Williams emerged quietly from his dressing room and crossed the hall to tap lightly on his stage love's door.

"Come in!" invited Pauline.

Anne, ready except for a finishing dab of powder, looked her surprise at Bob's entrance.

"Oh, I thought it was Mr. Turner!" she explained.

"Not the author but one of his brain children," smiled Bob, "Say, Anne, but you look stunning tonight!"

"Flatterer!"

"I mean it! You almost inspire me to start our love scene right now!"

"Bob!" Anne registered horror. "What do you want to do, fluster me so I can't act? I'm nervous enough now."

The star fullback laughed.

"Oh, you'll get over that your first minute on. That's a good sign. Means you're going to do great!"

"You think so?" asked Anne, doubtfully, "I wish I could believe in signs."

"Listen!" commanded Bob, "There's not much more time but there's something I've been meaning to ask you for a week."

Anne leaned forward to take a last glimpse of herself in a badly battered mirror.

"Too bad this theatre isn't used more often," she remarked, self-consciously, "Then maybe they'd keep it more up-to-date."

"Hey, I'm talking!" grinned Bob, refusing to be side-tracked, "Anne, I want very much to take you to the Grid Club Party. Will you go with me?"

The leading lady turned to face her leading man. As she did so a figure appeared in the door behind and stood silently, scowling. Bob leaned forward, appealingly.

"Your answer, Pauline?" he begged, making use of a line from the play.

"I—please, Bob. I can't answer you now. And I can't explain . . ."

"Five minutes!" came the stage manager's voice, "Everybody in the first act, upstairs!"

"I'll see you, then, after the show!" cried

Bob, and swung about to leave the dressing room. "Why, hello, Rusty!"

The villain made no answer but, as the leading man stepped across to his dressing room to slip on his coat, Rusty followed.

"What you trying to do?" he demanded, angrily, "Beat my time?"

The star fullback faced his accuser, arms in the coat sleeves.

"What do you mean?"

"I asked Anne to the Grid Club a couple weeks ago!"

"Well, what does that have to do with *my* asking her? She hasn't accepted you yet, has she?"

"No, but she's going to!"

"That's what *you* think!"

"We'll see about that!"

"You bet we'll see!" The star fullback pushed his way to the door.

"One of these days somebody's going to take a nice fat poke at you!" said the villain, in a vicious undertone.

"*Any time!*" accepted the leading man, "But first let's get this play over."

“What’s keeping you guys?” cried stage manager Henry, rushing up, “Buzz is tearing his hair!”

“Coming!” answered Rusty and Bob together, jostling each other as they clambered up the narrow stairs.

Looking through the peep hole in the curtain, Director Turner saw a house that was packed to the peanut limit of capacity. Row upon row of stiff white shirts, broken alternately by brilliant-hued evening gowns. Extra chairs in the boxes and every available foot of standing room taken. A sea of faces staring expectantly toward the curtain. Buzz had the uncomfortable feeling that the audience could see and recognize his eye as it fitted against the peep hole. Imagine standing out on the stage before that crowd! And accepting a loving cup! He’d soon put the quietus on this well meant plan to do him public honor! President Seymour had been most considerate. “Of course, old man, we wouldn’t want to embarrass you!” To which he, greatly agitated, had replied, “Embarrass me! . . . It would darn near kill me!” But, just the same, the playwright-director was glad that the

theatre was jammed. He thrilled at the thought that all those eyes out there were to gaze upon his play, hear lines spoken that he had written and react to situations he had conceived.

"This should be the greatest moment of my life—so far," Buzz told himself, "But the way I feel right now I'd sell it for a nickel!"

Hurrying offstage to be near the stagehand in charge of the curtain, Director Turner was stopped in the wings by a heart-fluttering Edwina. She placed a trembling and unsteady hand on his arm.

"Oh, I'm so afraid I'll drop that cigarette on the floor!" she cried, "I've practiced that business over and over and every time . . ."

"Stop thinking about it!" commanded Buzz, feeling the perspiration ooze through his pores anew, "You're supposed to be discovered on the stage when the curtain goes up. Hurry up out there and take your seat. It's curtain time right now!"

"Oh, my cigarette! It isn't lighted!"

"Where the devil's the property manager?"

Director Turner looked around for Gus Hill, bearer of that title, who had been appointed to

this responsibility by the Dramatic Club committee. No Gus in sight.

"Here! I'll light it for you!" Buzz fumbled through his pockets for matches, found them and held the flame of one to the end of Edwina's cigarette.

"Oh, look at your hand shake!" wailed Edwina, "You're afraid I'm not going to do this business right yourself!"

A restless movement of the huge audience could be heard backstage. It was five minutes past curtain time. In desperation Director Turner seized Edwina and fairly ran her to her chair, well downstage, beside the table. He seated her, handed her the copy of the Paris Herald and, while Edwina was in the act of protesting, raced off the stage, frenziedly motioning for the curtain to be raised.

There followed a moment of prickling silence as the curtain went up. But, in that moment, the much worried Edwina had experienced a remarkable recovery of composure. The audience saw her only as a quite obviously spoiled young thing, seated in the parlor-office of the little French hotel, legs crossed, 'puffing nonchalantly' on a cigarette. The char-

acter Gwendolyn, her every movement watched breathlessly from the wings, turned several pages of the paper, puffing 'nonchalantly' the while. But now her puffs became more staccato. She was getting interested in an item. Very much interested. Puff! Puff! Too interested to smoke. Gwendolyn reached for her cigarette, jerked it from her lips and jabbed it at the table, keeping her eyes glued on the paper in a death stare.

"Thank God, she did it!" burst from an agonized director as Miss Kaufman, playing Lulu, the maid, took this as her cue to make entrance.

Lulu, apparently on her way through the room, noticed the little wisp of smoke trailing up from the cigarette on the table edge, stopped to register horror, then hurried over and snatched up the offending article, examining the table to see if any damage had been done. Satisfied that she had just arrived in time, Lulu turned and started out with the cigarette, holding it awkwardly from her.

"Lulu!" cried Gwendolyn, lowering the paper, "There you go again with one of my cigarettes!"

Lulu paused. "Ah, but mademoiselle! You put cigarettes here—cigarettes there—and cigarettes there!" Her gestures were killing.

A roar came from the audience and from that instant all those backstage knew that the play had caught on.

"I could kiss 'em both!" murmured an overwhelmed playwright-director who had been afraid to look and yet afraid not to.

And when the curtain descended on the last line of the first act, a greatly relieved individual wearing a collar a size too large, was literally 'here, there, and there' extending overjoyed congratulations. Everyone was doing wonderful. No one had dropped so much as a word yet. Edwina had faltered temporarily in one spot but she had recovered herself just as the line was being fed to her.

"Keep up the good work!" entreated Buzz.

Exploitation manager P. Cornelius Blossom rushed in. He had been out front in the lobby during the first part of the intermission.

"The audience likes it!" he raved, "Folks are saying 'Clever idea! Good suspense! Fine acting!' "

President Seymour appeared, having come

backstage from his seat in the fourth row, orchestra.

"What do *you* hear?" asked Buzz, unwilling to believe the word of a publicity man.

"Some folks say she's a little slow in spots. Too talky," said the president, frankly.

The playwright-director's face fell.

"Well, I'm glad they say it's only in spots," he replied, grasping at crumbs of comfort.

"But I told 'em they hadn't seen anything yet," reassured President Seymour.

"You were probably right," agreed Buzz, mournfully.

"Say, don't get the wrong idea! I just gave you the only criticism. They like it!" insisted the president.

But the playwright remained unconvinced.

Regarding President Seymour's statement that the audience hadn't seen anything yet, he was positively right. In comparison to the second and third acts, the first act of B. G. Turner's emotional drama was as nothing. It merely set the stage for the tempestuous action to follow. Advertised as 'a scorching play of Americans in France,' "Money to Burn" didn't actually get hot until the middle of the

second act. But, when this point was reached with the starting of Jacques Brugnon's mad love scene over Pauline, the audience moved to the edge of its seats and stayed there. The arrival of Donald Williams, the American, to rescue Pauline from the arms of her jealously insane French lover, brought an involuntary cheer. The scene built up swiftly toward that which the author had hoped would be proclaimed as a big climax. He sat, fronting the back of a folding chair, in the wings, nervously rumpling his hair and repeating each line under his breath as it was uttered, perspiration streaming down his face, eyes strained with anxiety.

"If this only goes over!" he murmured as Proprietor Rene Tochard entered, in answer to the summons of an infuriated Jacques. Oh, everybody was playing their part up to the hilt! This was a difficult scene. Not the slightest detail must go wrong in it. There mustn't be the least cause for a snicker. It was to be played for the last ounce of drama. Buzz felt himself lifting his body from the chair as the scene lifted its tempo. Up, up, up! . . . Now Jacques had rushed to the door and was

calling to the peasants on the street . . .
the vendors . . . the nearby merchants .
. . the passersby . . . to come in and
bear witness against this 'no good American!'
Donald Williams was standing, facing the
music, hands clenched, hair-disheveled, Pauline
clinging to one arm, fearsomely. What a pic-
ture it made! Gad! How Bob looked the part!
Thoroughbred Yankee! And how like the
perfect villain was Rusty! . . . Face dis-
torted, eyes blazing . . . he was outdoing
himself! And now, with the French mob
crowding in at his back, he was launching his
accusations, the American standing his ground
while indignities were heaped upon him. . .
while he was charged with loaning money
to Pauline's father in return for her! And
NOW . . .!

"So ze American, he take my Pauline!"
cried Jacques.

This was the cue for the fight. A few quick
blows, a dagger drawn, with Henri Tochard,
Pauline's soldier brother, former buddy of
Donald's, coming in between to take the stab
intended for the American. As the line was
hurled from Rusty's lips, Buzz excitedly kicked

the folding chair from under him and crouched in the wings, breathing heavily.

Smack!

Jacques' first blow landed, a crack to the jaw. Pauline screamed. Donald staggered under the impact and dropped to his knees.

"My stars!" exclaimed Buzz, "He must have slipped!"

But Donald was up in an instant, raising his arms defensively and diving into Jacques.

"What's the idea—socking me like that?" he gasped, so that none but Rusty could hear.

Jacques grinned, fiendishly.

"We're supposed to fight, aren't we?" was his low-voiced retort.

Crack! The American's fist shot out and clipped the Frenchman on the nose. Blood spurted. Pauline screamed again. The French mob acted very much concerned. As for the audience, fainter hearts turned their heads but the packed house, for the most part, looked on with emotions keyed to the breaking point.

A half dozen more blows were struck, all landing with jolting force. And then, to the added horror of the audience, the wounded Jacques flashed a dagger and leaped forward.

“Ooooh!” shrieked a woman spectator,
“Stop him, somebody!”

This the courageous brother of the beautiful Pauline did by interposing his own body and receiving the stab of the rubber dagger, falling mortally wounded.

There were just a few lines spoken after this—the lines bringing out the change of sentiment toward the American as he and Pauline knelt by Henri’s side—and then came the curtain with the French mob seizing upon a bloody, beaten-looking Jacques, still hurling threats at ‘ze no good American!’

The scene was simply terrific. Pauline’s throwing of herself across the now dead body of her brother. The French Proprietor, who had gambled his money away and borrowed heavily of the American, crying and shouting and pulling frenziedly at the stubble of his goatee. Donald Williams, trying to console Pauline. A murderous Jacques being held back by fellow Frenchmen only after the most strenuous of efforts.

And, as the curtain dropped swiftly, tingling cheers burst spontaneously from the lips of the audience followed by thunderous salvos of

applause which continued unabated until the curtain was raised three times to permit principals and supers to take bows.

"Author! Author!" shouted some one, the cry being taken up by the house. But the overwhelmed playwright could not be coaxed or driven before the curtain.

"Put her there, Bob!" he cried, the instant he could reach his leading man, "That was the most realistic acting I ever saw!"

"Acting?" Bob replied, caustically, "You poor boob! That wasn't acting! It was the real stuff!"

Buzz stared at Bob dazedly. "What? . . . You don't mean . . .? Oh, my gosh!"

Out front an excited hum of comment and controversy existed. Everyone agreed it was one of the most thrilling second act curtains they had ever witnessed.

"Of course that was just stage blood," said one old lady, "But my, how he ever got it to run out of his nose like that is beyond me!"

Downstairs in his dressing room, Jacques Brugnon, muttering to himself and surrounded by curious lookers-on, busied himself with

washing off the 'stage blood' and trying to make his nose presentable for a third act appearance.

"What was the idea of going at it so hard?" asked one of the supers.

"Ask Bob!" flared Rusty, "He started it!"

Anne, turned back from her dressing room door, lips quivering. And Bob, who might have challenged this remark, had he overheard it, came sliding down the stairs, striding directly to his room and slamming the door.

Holding interest throughout the third act after the smashing second act climax, "Money to Burn" entered its last scene with an enthusiastic audience already declaring it a "great show."

Two well-dressed men from out of town, theatrical in bearing, had watched the play with interest, centering their attention chiefly upon the feminine lead.

"She's the one we want," whispered one.

"Some looker!" said the other, "But what if our proposition doesn't interest her?"

"Say, she'll jump at the chance to get in the movies! Imagine being just the type we're

looking for to star in our picture! With the sky the limit as to salary if she passes the screen test!"

On the stage Pauline and Donald had been left alone and it was Bob's line—the line that Buzz had read to him so fervently the night that it had come hot off the point of his pen.

"Pauline, you would go against your own father—for me?"

"Oui, Donald," Anne replied, looking up into his eyes, "*You* were right . . . Papa wrong. What else can I do?"

Bob bent over her with a swift, softly spoken aside. "Go to the Grid Club Dance with me!"

He felt Anne's body quiver from the shock as he took her hand and followed up quickly, in character, with, "I love you, Pauline!"

But, as he drew her to him, she matched his own audacity with a reply between tight lips, "Sorry! I'm going with Rusty!"

The unexpected answer brought a cold wave reaction. Then the realization that he was out there before a packed house . . . he mustn't lose his grip on the scene . . . he must finish strong . . . but, Anne not

going to the Grid Club Dance with him? . . .
Going with Rusty!

"I've always loved you," Bob vaguely heard his voice declaring, "Ever since that first day we met. . . ." And then the rest . . . that flood of words he had memorized so well, all seemed a blur, though he knew he was speaking them . . . and now, taking her in his arms and saying, like so much mockery, "Marry me, ma cherie! Today!" and Pauline, playing her part, crying, "Oh, Donald! My Yankee! . . . My American!" . . . and then the kisses, against lips quite unresponsive . . . once, twice, three times . . . as the business in the script dictated . . . and wild applause which told him that the curtain was all the way down . . . on a happy ending. Yes, a happy ending for the play but for Bob Delano, star fullback, the ending was wretchedly, tragically unhappy!

CHAPTER XII

A SECRET PROPOSAL

DEMANDS for a second night's showing of "Money to Burn" poured in upon the Bartlett Dramatic Club's play management the day following their greatest Annual Play triumph and one Buzz Turner, author and director, was deluged with praises until his head and eyes swam. In so much as crossing the campus now he was pointed out awesomely as the man who wrote the smash hit and each principal character in the play had been carried to glory along with the playwright. But of all who attained sudden and undying distinction by their part in the dramatic sensation, none wore their laurels so loudly and so proudly as the . . . er . . . *plump* comedienne.

Told in the beginning by Director Turner that he did not want her to take the statement he was about to make in the wrong way but that he was actually giving her a 'fat' part, Edwina Perry had proven the assertion to be

correct by walking off with the comedy honors of the show.

"My dear, that stout girl was a scream!" folks remarked over and over, the following day. And Edwina, naturally overhearing declarations similar in substance, grew a little stouter around the chest region and held her head a little higher. In one fell stroke had she graduated from merely being a college fat girl to one of Bartlett's most accomplished young actresses. But, more noteworthy even than this, her attendance at the Grid Club Dance with the literary lion of the campus would be equal to being crowned queen of the May. No longer would practical jokesters get off such puns as her making a *big* impression wherever she went. She'd make an impression all right but it wouldn't be because of her size. Why, just today she'd received bids from all three of the leading sororities who've never so much as considered her before! Such was the fruit of fame!

"Oh, yes! Buzz is just mad about me!" Edwina gushed to whoever had time to listen, "He says he's going to write a comedy just for me. And if 'Money To Burn' ever ge

chance to be produced on Broadway, he's going to recommend that they play me in the Gwendolyn Murfee part. I didn't think I was so awfully good myself. Of course I knew I was funny but I thought it was on account of the perfectly ridiculous lines. Why, they struck me so funny the first week I was rehearsing that I had to repeat them over and over in my room so I wouldn't laugh out loud when I said them. And did you notice how I laid that cigarette on the edge of the table without even looking? Looked easy, didn't it? But I want to tell you that was a difficult piece of business. I worked on it for hours. Perseverance, though! You'd be surprised. Mr. Turner . . . excuse me, I mean Buzz . . . was so tickled with my acting when I made my first exit that he slapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Atta girl!' Just carried away with himself, I guess, but it just goes to show . . . Oh, you're not going? . . . Got a class? . . . Well, I'll be seeing you again soon! Ta dee da!"

It required a second matter of sensational interest, following closely upon the heels of the first, to crowd the play triumph into the back-

ground. But the Saturday after Thanksgiving was only four days away, marking the date for the long anticipated Pennington-Bartlett encounter—two great elevens which had played through the toughest possible schedules, emerging undefeated.

“Each eleven has already beaten any and all teams that rightfully might have laid claim to a national championship,” read one sports editorial, “So it looks very much as though the dream of Coach Bruce Edwards of Bartlett was on the verge of being realized. The team winning this mighty clash—and there seems no doubt that the game will be closely contested—should indisputably be crowned ‘champ of ‘em all’!”

“Pennington, with her warhorse, King Moulton, and Bartlett, with her flash, Bob Delano, are due to present individual as well as team battles worth going miles to see. And this is just what thousands are going to do for the game is to be played in the Yankee Stadium, New York City.”

Taking no chances of injuries to players during the few days of practice prior to the big game, Coach Edwards permitted Bartlett

squad members to taper off in their work. They had shown signs of going stale in the last contest against Great Western, exhibiting a ragged, lifeless sort of play at times—something almost certain to prove fatal if caught out of stride by Pennington.

“You’ve got the battle of your lives just ahead,” the coach warned his players, “And I want you to be in the best possible condition because when you trot out on that Stadium field you’re going to face one of the greatest teams ever developed in this country!”

“Don’t we know it!” whistled one of the squad.

“You *should* know it!” snapped the coach, “But how seriously are you taking it? I’m telling you again so you won’t forget! Some of you birds, judging from the way you played last Saturday, have begun to get the idea that you’re good yourselves! In fact you’re so good that all you’ve got to do is be present to win. You’ve all heard what happened to Napoleon and also why Rome fell. Vanity has a little sister and her name’s Over-confidence! Look out for her! She’s a bad old girl to be flirting with!”

The team members laughed but Coach Edwards knew he had knifed home his point.

“Wake up, Anne, here’s some mail for you!”

Norma Packard shook her sleeping roommate gently. It was eight-thirty of the morning following the play’s presentation and, as Anne did not have a class until ten o’clock, Norma had let her secure a much-needed rest. The two and a half weeks of play rehearsing, added to her college work, had proven exhausting. Anne stirred, rolled over and sat up, rubbing her eyes.

“Mail, did you say?”

“Yes—here.”

Norma handed her a letter.

“Oh, from Mr. Naylor, Uncle Billy’s lawyer!” Anne exclaimed, “It’s probably my last allowance check. You see my birthday’s next Monday!”

Anne tore open the envelope at the end and shook it. A folded letterhead dropped out. No check. Squinting in the envelope to make sure the familiar pale green slip of paper had not stuck to a side, Anne turned to the letter

with interest. She read quickly, then tossed the letter over to Norma.

“What do you make of this?”

Norma picked up the letter wonderingly and scanned its contents.

My dear Miss Morgan:

As you know, it is nearing the date of your twenty-first birthday, the time when your allowances, according to your uncle Billy Corcoran's will, are to be discontinued.

There is a matter, however, of the greatest importance which I must see you about at your earliest convenience.

Are you planning to be in New York City to witness Bartlett play Pennington? If so, could you arrange to see me at my office Saturday morning around eleven o'clock?

Please advise me at once if you can keep this appointment.

With all good wishes, I am,

Cordially,

Clark Naylor

Norma looked up from her reading, frankly puzzled.

“I don't know, Anne, what to make of this unless there's some red tape about receiving your last allowance which has to be taken care of. Perhaps you have to sign something as evi-

dence that you make no further claim on your uncle's estate."

Anne, arms locked about knees, shook her head.

"N-no, I don't think that's it," she said, slowly, "I've a feeling it has something to do with Louie."

Norma evidenced immediate concern. "Oh, I hope not. Why, there couldn't be anything . . . You've nothing to do with . . . Oh, I might as well stop guessing. Legal matters have always been beyond me."

Anne smiled. "But I don't see any reason now why I can't call on Mr. Naylor at that time, do you?" she asked, "We were planning on being in New York late Friday night. I've already written for reservations at the Hotel Belmore. His office is only about fifteen minutes from there and seeing him shouldn't take so long."

"No, that sounds all right," considered Norma, "Game starts at two o'clock sharp, though, remember . . . and it's quite a ways out to the Yankee stadium. We ought to be eating lunch around twelve!"

"Lunch!" joshed Anne, "Norma Packard!

You've talked more about the meals we were going to have in New York than the game. I really believe that's what you're making the trip for!"

"Why not?" rejoined Norma, unblushingly, "I'm sick and tired of shoving a tray along a counter and picking out smelly food, a la cafeteria. It'll be a treat to me to sit back and have a good-looking man waiter bowing and asking me, 'What will you have, Miss?' Oh, yes! And we must go some place where you get music with your meals. I love music with my meals."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Anne, "And jazz our food down! It'll ruin our digestion!"

"But think how good the food'll taste!" argued Norma.

Anne glanced at her room-mate, mischievously.

"With the orchestra playing such ditties, I suppose, as 'Just Starving For You'?"

A pillow, suddenly precipitated into flight, caught the unsuspecting Anne full in the face and toppled her backwards. In another instant the air was full of fluffy feathers and the battle might have continued 'on, on, into the day'

had it not been for the urgent ringing of the telephone.

“Hello!” gasped Norma, “What’s wanted—laundry? . . . Oh, excuse me! It was about time for the laundry and I thought . . . two gentlemen downstairs . . . for *Anne*? At this time of day? Well, she’s . . .!” Norma looked about, consultingly.

“Find out who they are!” called Anne, brushing feathers from her hair and preparing to dress.

Norma turned back to the phone, resuming her conversation with the matron. “Mrs. Hull . . . do you know who they are? . . . Never saw ’em before! . . .” Norma placed her hand over the mouthpiece. “Anne, they’re strangers! Do you think it’s safe?”

“Have them give their names,” ordered Anne.

“She’ll have to know who they are!” Norma relayed to Mrs. Hull, “Oh, I see!” Once more Norma turned to Anne, excitedly, “Anne, they’re two gentlemen from New York City who saw you act last night. They want to see you about something they’re sure will be of interest!”

Anne's eyes widened. Gentlemen from New York!

"Have Mrs. Hull show them into the reception room and tell them I'll be down in ten minutes," she decided.

Norma did as directed, then hung up the receiver and danced about, wild with curiosity.

"Oh, Anne! Isn't this thrilling? Maybe it's some New York producers! Oh, I always told you you ought to go on the stage! Here! Can't I help you dress?"

But Anne, spurning assistance, did an astonishingly quick toilet, dashed into her clothes and, taking an additional second to obtain Norma's 'okay' on her looks, darted out the door.

"You're some volunteer fireman, dearie!" Norma sang after her, "Now hurry back to mamma with the news!"

A solicitous Mrs. Hull, all eyes, met Anne at the foot of the stairs.

"They're swells!" she whispered, "Stuck on you, too! Big city men all right! You should see the diamond on the little man's finger! . . . I'd be afraid to wear a fortune like that! I told them some nice things about you

while they were waiting. Figured it wouldn't do no harm!"

"Why, Mrs. Hull!" reproved Anne, shocked.

"That's all right, Miss Morgan. I'm always glad to help any way I can!"

"Miss Morgan?" inquired the taller of the two men, pleasantly, as the trim figure of a girl appeared in the doorway.

"Yes?" replied Anne quietly, glancing quickly at her two visitors.

"Well, my name's Mr. Montrose Sylvester," introduced the taller man, "And this is my associate, Mr. Lee M. Sanford."

Anne bowed.

"Here's our cards." The taller man extended the pasteboards which Anne glimpsed with a gasp.

Montrose Sylvester

FAIRAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION

Casting Director

New York City

And the second card:

Lee M. Sanford

FAIRAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION

Supervising Director

New York City

"I—I see!" Anne replied, quite overwhelmed. Think of it! Men from one of the greatest motion picture companies in the world! Calling to see her! Impossible but true! Anne seated herself, dazedly, first inviting her two visitors to be seated.

"Miss Morgan," said the taller man, who had elected himself spokesman, "We came up here yesterday to look your college over as a possible locale for some scenes we have to shoot in a picture we're just starting. We also had our eyes open for a certain type of college girl who's called for in this scenario. We thought we'd have her selected long before this but we've tried at least fifty and they haven't suited. But last night, being up here and seeing this play advertised . . ."

"We bought ourselves the last two feet of standing room," broke in Mr. Sanford.

"And proceeded to get the surprise of our lives," continued Mr. Sylvester, "By witnessing a performance and a play that would do credit to a Broadway production."

"Oh, do you really think so?" asked Anne, eagerly.

"I'll tell you how much we think so," in-

sisted the casting director, "We've already wired our scenario department to get in touch with the author immediately with a view to buying the script!"

Anne could not conceal her pleasure. "Why, that's wonderful!"

"But you mustn't say anything about it," warned Mr. Sanford, "We're giving you confidential information."

"That's right," affirmed Mr. Sylvester, "Anything we say to you, Miss Morgan, must be treated with absolute secrecy. The competition in this business is terrific and we make it a policy never to reveal our hand until we're all set. Why, about six months ago we approached a famous aviatrix with a proposition to star her in a picture. In some manner the news leaked out and the Almagamated Films Company got to her, raised our offer, and signed her up. So, you see, you can't be too careful."

Anne nodded her comprehension.

"Not that we wouldn't have paid as high a salary," explained Mr. Sanford, "Because there's no company in the business that carries a heavier payroll than Fairamount. We

were just over-bid on our original offer and given no chance to raise it."

"Yes, I understand," said Anne, doubtfully.

"I suppose you're wondering what all this is leading to?" divined Mr. Sylvester, "Well, Miss Morgan, we haven't told you our biggest surprise yet. And that's what we've come to see you about."

Anne felt her breath growing short. She could anticipate now what was coming and the thrill of it was all but unnerving her.

The question, though expected, brought the startling reaction of a pistol shot.

"Would you consider a movie career?"

Anne sat stiffly, hesitant, uncertain, lips quivering, eyes wide . . . and brimming.

"Why, I . . . I . . ." she started, and then broke off, fingering her handkerchief nervously.

"You're the exact type we've been combing the country for," declared Mr. Sanford, "We both said that the moment we saw you. But the best part of it is—you can act! It's the chance of a life time, Miss Morgan . . . the chance that comes to one girl in ten mil-

lion . . . a chance to start right in at the top—as a star!”

Still Anne sat, unmoving, too dazed, too overcome to speak. But out of the maze of stunning realization, certain facts began to assert themselves. The most outstanding of the thoughts which came to her was of the letter she had received from lawyer Clark Naylor. In the next few days she would be paid her last allowance provided by her uncle's will and from then on she would be out on her own. She would have enough money to keep her through the college year but after that . . . ? Well, she hadn't figured that far ahead except that she had known she would have to go to work . . . had hoped to make her education serve her in some commercial capacity. But here was a golden opportunity knocking at her door! An opportunity to make bigger money than she had ever dared dream of! A moving picture star with a company like Fairmount! What could be more wonderful?

“Why, why yes, I believe I *would* be interested in going in the movies,” Anne found herself saying, in a voice which quavered, “That is—under the right conditions.”

The two Fairamount directors glanced at one another.

"Just what do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Sanford.

"Well, this is my last year at college," explained Anne, "And I'd awfully like to finish."

Mr. Sylvestor fingered his watch chain, debatingly.

"Hmmm! That's a little bit complicating! You see, Miss Morgan, the first picture we want to star you in is waiting to be shot now. We're already on location, down on the lower east side, New York."

"Well, I don't see how I . . ." started Anne.

"Couldn't you do this?" suggested Mr. Sanford, "Get a short leave of absence to help us out of the jam we're in? New York is only a few hours run from here. Besides, our story deals with college life and we can shoot about half the picture right here around the campus."

"If you could do that," Anne considered.

"Of course there's just one possible drawback," said Mr. Sylvestor, "You'll have to take a screen test . . . and you might not photograph well. Personally, I think you'll

screen like a million dollars but the camera is the only real judge."

"I realize that," nodded Anne.

"So what we'd like you to do is to run in with us to New York," proposed Mr. Sanford, "And let us make this test as quickly as possible, so we can get right to work if everything turns out satisfactorily."

Anne hesitated.

"I don't believe I could leave here until Friday night. I've some work I just must finish. But I expect to be in New York Saturday anyway. Couldn't I see you then?"

"Let's see," calculated Mr. Sylvestor, "That's three days. What do you think about it, Lee? Can we wait that long?"

"Well, we don't want to put Miss Morgan out too much. We can be shooting the scenes meanwhile that she wouldn't appear in," decided Mr. Sanford, "What time could you see us Saturday, Miss Morgan?"

"Oh, as early in the morning as you'd like. I'm going to the football game in the afternoon. Will the screen test take so long?"

"Not more than an hour or so," replied Mr. Sylvestor, "What do you say then, Miss Mor-

gan, to meeting us at nine a.m. Saturday at . . . wait a minute, I'd better write this address down on the card for you." The casting director reached out for his card which Anne held in her hand. As he scribbled the address, the leading lady of "Money To Burn" turned inquiringly to Mr. Sanford.

"May I ask what this picture you're taking is about?"

"Why, let me see?" recalled the supervising director, "It has to do with a certain high stepping set in college who get mixed up with a bootleg gang. The locale of the picture is mostly along the waterfront of East side New York and the heroine is a young college girl—that's the part you'd play—who cleans up a bunch of gangsters and rescues her boy friend who's gotten in their clutches . . . it's a corking melodrama . . . full of real American life . . . machine guns, stabs in the dark, river rats, the hooch that kills, and purity winning over all. Sure fire buncombe!"

"It—it sounds very good," said Anne, uncertainly.

"Here you are, Miss Morgan," broke in Mr. Sylvester, handing her back the card, "That's

where you'll find us—on location. Can you make it out? That's pretty terrible handwriting . . . thirty-six River street . . . it's not a very nice looking neighborhood but don't let that scare you. We picked it for atmosphere. It may not look like anyone's there but just rap on the door, give whoever answers our name . . . and you'll be admitted. Now can we count on seeing you Saturday at nine?"

Anne arose, the two directors also standing.

"I'll be there," she promised.

"Do you know New York or shall we tell you how to get there?" asked Mr. Sanford.

"I used to live in New York," smiled Anne, "So I've an approximate idea where this is. Thirty-six River street! . . . Second Avenue Elevated comes closest to it, doesn't it?"

"Right!" exclaimed Messrs. Sylvester and Sanford together.

"Oh, by the way," inquired Mr. Sanford, "Where do you expect to be stopping?"

"At the Belmore," informed Anne.

"Well, if for any reason you do miss connections we can always check up by reaching you there," the supervising director reassured.

“Good day, Miss Morgan,” bade Mr. Sylvester, bowing over her hand, “Let’s hope this meeting may lead to big things for you. I have every confidence that it will.”

“Oh, and Miss Morgan, let us caution you again not to mention this matter even to your most intimate friends. News has a way of traveling. After you’ve passed the test and are signed up with us—fine! But until then . . .!” Mr. Sanford held up a warning finger.

“You can trust me,” Anne assured.

The representatives of the Fairamount Pictures Corporation turned to go. At the doorway they were surprised to encounter the athletic figure of a young man—standing quietly—eyeing them.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, as they recognized in him—Donald Williams, the American.

The directors, with curt nods, brushed past him, turning at the door to bow their ‘find’ a last farewell. Bob watched them as they hurried down the hall.

“Who are those guys?” he asked of Anne, almost without thinking.

"Bob Delano! How long were you standing there?" Anne demanded, incensed.

"Not so very long. Mrs. Hull said you were in here so I . . ."

"So you thought you'd do some eavesdropping!" charged Anne.

Bob's face colored. "Well, I couldn't help hearing a little but I assure you I don't know what it's all about. I'll admit, though, I'm curious to know who those birds were. Looked pretty theatrical to me."

"Did it ever occur to you that this might not be any of your business?"

"Listen, Anne! You seem to have had it in for me lately. Just why, I can't figure. That's what I've come to see you about. You wouldn't fly off the handle this way if there wasn't something wrong. And last night—I haven't gotten over that turn-down yet. I'd counted on taking you to the Grid Club, Anne . . . looked forward to it . . ."

"Let me by, please. I don't want to talk about it."

"No you don't! I came here to find out the trouble. And you're going to tell me!"

"Let me go, I say! Bob, you—you're a brute!" as he still blocked her way. "Any man who would start a fight right in a play . . .!"

"Who started a fight?" cried the leading man, hotly, "Ask Rusty! . . . So that's what's on your mind, is it? . . . Well, let me tell *you* something. Rusty's been laying for me a long time. He deliberately injured me before that Hale game . . .!"

"Why, the very idea! How absurd! Why, there wasn't a man in college who felt worse about it. He went to the hospital that night to inquire your condition and came here to tell me just how you were!"

"Why shouldn't he? That was his game—so folks wouldn't suspect him!"

"Nonsense! And it's pretty small of you to accuse him!"

"It's the truth!" insisted Bob, "It isn't that I. . . ."

Anne squirmed past the star fullback at the door.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Delano," she said, stinging, as she started down the hall, "But I don't care to see you again!"

Bob stood a moment, white with rage and consternation. Then his pent-up feelings gave way to laughter.

“Boy, that’s what I’d call a dramatic exit!” he exclaimed.

Could he have followed a certain young lady to her room, however, he would have pondered long over the mysteries of the fairer sex, for he would have seen her fling herself upon the bed and sob broken-heartedly while a greatly concerned room-mate dashed madly about, berating the two strange gentlemen who had called.

“I’ll bet anything they were bill collectors!” she shrieked, “Trying to get the balance on that new dress you bought when your allowance didn’t come today! Oh, these men! They’re the cause of ninety percent of this world’s troubles! The idea of their sending up word they’d seen you act! Appealing to your vanity so’s to get you downstairs to show you something of interest—a *bill*! Why didn’t you call me? I could have told them plenty!”

CHAPTER XIII

MISSING!

You know what Edwina's done?" asked Buzz as a glum-faced Bob entered.

"No! What? Thrown you over?"

"I should say not! That girl's got brains! Or maybe it's pull! Anyhow, she just happened to think she's got a cousin in the producing business in New York. A Mr. Elmer Tweedy of Tweedy Productions Limited."

"What's the 'limited' stand for—'limited finances'?"

"You *would* say that!" raved the now admittedly famous playwright. "Well, Edwina, bless her *little* self, has sent a copy of 'Money To Burn,' first class, special delivery, registered with return receipt—enclosing a personal note, reminding the aforesaid Mr. Tweedy of their relationship and telling her dear distant cousin that my play is the cat's bow wows!"

"That's fine. I hope she also enclosed return postage!" said Bob, dryly.

"Hey! I thought you liked my play!"

"That's no reflection on the play. That's just what I think of Edwina's relatives."

"Is that so? Well, let me tell you something. Edwina's got a side to her you've never seen."

"Yeah—and so has the moon!"

"She's not so funny, either . . . that is, not unless she wants to be. She's deep!"

"You mean—wide."

"Oh, for gosh sake! Who bit *your* ear off! You haven't had a pleasant look since you took your bow last night. Snap out of it, King Tut. Crack that mummy face of yours with a grin. Look up! Live, love and be happy. Life is one sweet song!"

The star fullback dropped heavily in a chair.

"Well, sing to yourself then!"

Bartlett's distinguished playwright studied his room-mate intently.

"Unusual case of morbidity. Bet a girl's behind this. They generally are. A woman's the cause of at least ninety percent of the troubles in this world. On the other hand, they're responsible for the other ten percent of the good things. So it just about balances.

Now, Edwina, for instance—when we arrive in New York Saturday morning, she's going to take me down to meet the honorable Mr. Tweedy in person. She's requested him to have had my play all read by that time and to be ready to talk terms. So—I'm taking my fountain pen!"

Bob sat up, suddenly.

"Wait a minute! . . . Are you kidding yourself as you go along or taking yourself seriously?"

"Both, my dear fellow," answered Buzz, quite unaffected, "And I might say here that Edwina has not had the pleasure of seeing her cousin since she was a kid in short pants. No, that's not right, is it? I mean—short skirts. Anyhow, she declares she's certain he'll be interested in seeing her because she always considered him one of her favorite cousins. But they just sort of grew away from each other . . ."

"So I'd imagine," agreed Bob, quizzically, "By about fifty pounds!"

Buzz looked daggers.

"And he died where he was sitting! . . .

Well, old boy, whatever you say to the contrary notwithstanding."

"You just said 'sitting' . . ."

"Well, isn't 'sitting' 'not with standing'?"

"I surrender!" grinned Bob, "Anything you say goes after this. And may you and Edwina live happily ever after!"

"That all depends on what her cousin thinks of 'Money To Burn'!" the playwright rejoined.

The Bartlett squad entrained for New York City Thursday evening that the players might avail themselves of a light workout at the Yankee Stadium the day before the game. As they put up at the Ritz Hotel with a crowd surrounding them which filled the lobby and extended into the street, the team members received their first intimation of the tremendous interest the coming game had aroused.

New York newspapers had been ballyhooing the contest for weeks as the probable piece de resistance of college football and special trains were being run out of Chicago bringing hundreds of mid-west and far west enthusiasts.

The Yankee Stadium had been sold out for weeks with close onto eighty-five thousand assorted specimens of humanity due to see the battle. All the big coaches in the country were to be on hand with enough notables from every walk of life to do credit to a Dempsey-Tunney fight.

“Betting even!” was the cry on the streets, with scalpers offering tickets for twenty-five, fifty and a hundred apiece—according to location.

“Pennington Line Slightly Heavier Than Bartlett,” said a paper heading, “Weather Man Predicts Rain Saturday—Dampness To Favor Pennington!”

Another paper sounded the warning that Bartlett must stop King Moulton, Pennington’s triple threat, if they hoped to win. “Country’s Two Leading Candidates For All-American Fullback To Meet,” it broadcasted, “Great Duel Expected Between King Moulton and Bob Delano. Outcome May Decide Game!”

“What’s this noise about Rusty and Bob not being on speaking terms?” asked quarterback Chapin of a group of team-mates in the hotel lobby Friday morning.

"That's the straight dope," verified Slim Tyler, "Why, they won't even ride up in the same elevator together if they can see each other coming first!"

"What do you suppose is up now?"

"Rusty blames it all on Bob," explained Slim, "He says Bob hauled off and socked him on the beezer in the play—on purpose. Personally, whether he did or not, I think that blow put the show over!"

"Me, too!" agreed Big Jim, as team-mates grinned, "Boy, that was one beautiful wallop! I'm not saying Rusty hasn't had it coming to him for some time, either, though he has been much better lately. And while we're on the subject, did you guys notice the nice little jab Rusty landed just before Bob countered with his blow to the beak?"

Fellow players shook their heads.

"No, did he?"

"Maybe you weren't on the right side of the house to see it," said Big Jim, "But I was on more of a slant. I was one of those unlucky birds who had to sit on an extra chair in the box. You remember when Bob dropped to his knees?"

"But that was only a stage fall!" declared Ed Raymond.

"Don't you believe it! Bob wasn't the only one who was shaking a wicked fist. And if Rusty got the worst of it at the finish that's his hard luck!"

"Well, has anybody got Bob's side of the story?" quarterback Chapin wanted to know.

"He won't talk," said Slim, "I tried to sound him out but he shut up like a clam. Referred me to Rusty for the gruesome details."

Big Jim laughed. "What the dickens are we worrying about their private feud for? They say a man plays better when he's mad. If that's the case Bob and Rusty ought to be plenty hot tomorrow!"

Rain, for once true to the weather man's prognostications, started falling early in the morning of the eventful day. By the time for all good men to arise and do their setting up exercises, the world presented a wet and bleak appearance. Moreover it was one of those cold rains, driven by just enough of a breeze to sneak in under umbrellas and dampen legs and feet. A great day to sit by one's fireside

and listen to the radio account of the game but a wretched day to huddle in a field box under slickers, newspapers and umbrellas.

“I wonder if I should venture out in this?” Anne asked herself, anxiously, as she gazed from the window of her double room on the tenth floor of the Belmore, “I don’t know whether they can make screen tests a day as dark as this or not. Mr. Sylvester didn’t leave me a telephone number and I doubt if they have one at the address he gave me. Still, they know where I’m stopping. If the weather was going to interfere, I presume they’d have gotten in touch with me before now.”

To Norma, enjoying the luxury of breakfast in bed, Anne’s arising early to attend to business was a scream.

“I’ve never come to New York with you yet that you weren’t running off to some conference or other,” she chided, “Don’t you ever go anywhere to relax and let life pass you by? Why try to keep up with it all the time?”

Anne laughed. “You wait! One of these days I’ll show you the fruits of my labors and then you’ll wish you’d been more energetic. I’m keeping a very important engagement this

morning which may lead to big things!"

"Yes? . . . What is it? My, these eggs are wonderfully well poached. And did you ever see toast so delightfully browned? . . ."

Anne looked at her room-mate reprovingly. "Which are you more interested in—your breakfast or me?"

"Now, Anne—you shouldn't ask such embarrassing questions!" retorted Norma.

"Well, please drop your toast and eggs long enough to get these instructions," directed Anne, "I'm to call at Mr. Naylor's office at eleven as you know. But I'm going further downtown first and, if for any reason I'm a little delayed and Mr. Naylor should call in, you tell him I haven't forgotten, that I'll be there."

"All right, dearie. But where is this place you're going now—at this ungodly hour in the morning?"

"Why it's a quarter past eight!"

"Yes, I know, but I've always heard that New Yorkers don't start work until eleven. You'd better come back to bed for a couple hours."

“Don’t worry, these people I’m going to see will be up and waiting for me. They told me to call at nine o’clock and I’ll have to be hurrying now if I make it.”

“But you still haven’t told me where you’re going?” persisted Norma.

“Ah, that’s a secret!” teased Anne, “I’ll tell you all about it when I return. I may even have some great news for you.”

“You get back here by twelve noon or I’ll have some great news for *you!*” cautioned Norma, “I’m not going to let you put *your* business before *my* pleasure!”

“Oh, roll over and get some more sleep!” replied Anne, as she went out the door.

But Norma, with a gesture of defiance, only rolled over and had some more eggs and toast.

A dejected group of players hung about their rooms on the fifteenth floor of the Ritz. The weather was distinctly not to Bartlett’s liking. The team much preferred the fast going possible on a dry field. On hard, even frozen ground, Bob Delano had been a streak. The wet, soggy condition underfoot was naturally due to slow him up considerably. But, King

Moulton, Pennington star, had been essentially a line plunger and little fears were held out as to his ability to do as well, if not better, in sloppy weather.

“A tough break if there ever was one!” growled Big Jim, “But we’ve got what it takes to beat those guys and we’ve got to show it if she cloudbursts!”

“You said it!” snapped quarterback Chapin, “It’s going to be a real case of ‘sink or swim’!”

A quarter after eleven the telephone in room 1056, Hotel Belmore, jingled noisily. Norma, dressed and sitting by the window, looking down at the traffic tangles on the slippery streets, reached over lazily and took down the receiver.

“Hello? . . . Yes, this is her room but she’s out just now. Oh, how do you do, Mr. Naylor! . . . This is Norma Packard! Yes, that’s right—her traveling companion! Why, isn’t she there yet? Let’s see. Eleven-fifteen! That’s strange. She said she might be a little late, though, and to tell you, if you called, that she’d surely be there. . . . Why, she left here a little after eight. . . .

No, I haven't any idea. But she promised to be back here at the hotel by twelve. Doesn't look like she'd make it, does it? And the game starts at two! . . . I know, isn't it just dreadful? . . . Oh, I think we're in the covered stands! . . . Yes, that's some consolation! . . . Well, if she hasn't arrived in another ten or fifteen minutes, let me know, will you? . . . Oh, not at all! . . . Thank you! . . . Bye, bye!"

Norma hung up the receiver and turned her attention back to the street. What a city this was, anyway! Taxis always madly trying to get a lot of somebodies a good many somewheres. And then get them back again. Slow moving delivery trucks and omnibuses getting in their way. Then the battle of auto horns and sirens, speaking a harsh language of their own. "Move on! Move on! . . . What's the matter with you? . . . Pull over! . . . Look out! Don't back! Who taught you to drive? . . . I had the right of way! . . . So this is an ice wagon, is it?" It was a language which Norma, through fascinated observation, had been able to interpret well and it at once thrilled and amused her.

Ding-a-ling-a-ling!

Norma started and glanced at her wrist watch. Eleven thirty-five! If that was Mr. Naylor again . . .! It was!

“And she isn’t there yet? Oh, then something must have happened! . . . No, I feel sure of it. If she’d known she was going to be delayed that long she’d have phoned you from some place . . . and me, too! . . . Well, that’s just it! A person doesn’t know where to begin. She might have met with an accident! . . . Would the police know? Are they in touch with the hospitals? . . . Oh, dear! I hate to think . . . *Violence?* . . . You think so, too? . . . You know, Mr. Naylor, I don’t know whether Anne ever wrote you but we’ve had some strange things happen at Bartlett. Our room was entered and everything gone through . . . and then, some nights later, I went out with Anne’s wrap on, and I was shot at twice. . . . Is that so? . . . Then you’d really intended to warn her? . . . Oh, you scare me! . . . No, I don’t believe there’s a soul knows where she was going. Wait! There’s just a chance!

. . . Mr. Naylor—if you'll wait in your office or leave word where I can get in touch with you, maybe I . . .! What number? . . . Adrian five, six, seven, nine! . . . I'll try to reach some parties and phone you soon as I know anything!"

Twelve-fifteen was the time set by Coach Edwards for his squad to leave the Ritz Hotel in a bus bound for the Yankee Stadium. The players were leisurely gathering their togs together in readiness for the trip when Bob and Rusty received urgent telephone calls, within a few minutes of each other. The calls sent them racing separately from the hotel, assuring questioning team-mates that they would be right back but refusing to disclose their destinations. Bob arrived at room 1056, Hotel Belmore, first . . . but he had scarcely been admitted by an anxious-faced Norma, than Rusty was at the door, seeking entrance. The star fullback and his substitute glared at one another in shocked surprise. They had each run the two blocks distance between the two hotels and were out of breath. What sort

of a trick was this Norma had pulled? Getting them both together! Didn't she know they were . . . ?

"Oh, fellows!" cried Norma, "I didn't know what to do! I was so afraid I couldn't reach you before you left for the game . . . but, as I told you over the phone, I'm just sure something terrible has happened to Anne. She left here this morning shortly after eight to keep some sort of a secret business engagement and she hasn't shown up at lawyer Naylor's office at all. She was supposed to see him at eleven. It's almost twelve now! Mr. Naylor says he has reason to think she may have met with violence. But he doesn't know where to start looking for her . . . nor I. . . . And I thought . . . has Anne ever said, to either of you . . . ? would you have any way of knowing . . . ? oh, if we only had the slightest clue!"

Bob and Rusty looked at one another consultantly. Here was a common cause—a great emergency which called for the pooling of such resources as they had—for the possible aid of someone whom both held very dear.

"Why, I . . . I don't believe Anne's ever . . . let's see . . .!" stammered Rusty, trying desperately to recall.

Bob paced agitatedly across the room, clenching and unclenching his hands. What was it? . . . He'd overheard something . . . then he'd put it out of his mind because he realized he shouldn't have overheard it. Anne's repeating of an address and those two flashily attired men confirming it. Then, the shorter of the two impressing her to keep—whatever they had been talking about—quiet. But the address! What had it been?

"I know something!" said Bob, "If I can just get hold of it!"

He did some more pacing as Rusty ruffled his hair, trying to think, and Norma sat on the bed, biting nervously at her finger tips.

"River street!" cried Bob, suddenly, his face lighting up, "Thirty-six River! . . . That's the address I heard Anne repeat when I dropped in to see her last Tuesday morning . . . and found she had visitors!"

"Oh, yes—those two gentlemen from New York!" supplied Norma, "Anne was awfully

worked up over them. Wouldn't tell me who they were or anything about them!"

"I didn't like their looks at first glance," said Bob, "One was tall, sandy-haired, and walked with a limp. The other was short, dark, a little stocky and wore a phoney diamond ring. But Anne evidently thought they were the berries because, when I asked her who they were she hit the ceiling!"

"Maybe they'd come to see her about Louie! . . . Oh, I know now! It was probably about that five hundred dollars Louie demanded! That's why Anne was so upset!"

"Ever see Louie?" Rusty asked.

Bob shook his head. "No, did you?"

"Yeah, I met him the time he called on her," contributed the substitute fullback, "If you'd see him once you'd never forget him. Slim build, sunken face, hollow eyes, lids raw red, and a mouth that pulls down at one corner and quivers. Hair's dark, what there is of it. Looks highly nervous. He was the guy who took those shots at Norma that night only I didn't want Anne to know that . . . and make her worry any more than she was . . . so I gave out that I'd never seen the bird be-

fore. As it was I came within an ace of catching him!”

“I remember something now,” recalled Norma, “The matron, when she phoned up to Anne about these men, said they’d seen Anne act the night before and that they had a proposition to make to her that would be of interest!”

“Ah, that helps me!” recollected Bob, “The little short man said something about after Anne had passed the test and signed with them . . . do you suppose he meant ‘screen test’?”

Rusty’s eyes flashed.

“The old army game! . . . Sure! They were posing as movie men! That’s plain as day. What’s that address again? We’d better get busy!”

“Wait a minute!” Bob glanced at his watch, “It’s darn near twelve-fifteen! We both can’t get on this! One of us has got to go back to the team!”

Rusty started. That’s so! There was a little matter of a football game on this afternoon . . . a little matter of deciding the national championship. And it was still raining cats

and dogs! But, getting back to Anne! She was undoubtedly in trouble—serious trouble. A delay in her case might mean—anything! . . . And here was the chance to do something for her in a big way . . .! Was he going to let Bob . . .? But Bob was right. One of them would have to stay behind and stick with the team. Coach Edwards would blow up as it was . . . but he'd just have to blow, that was all! This was certainly a forgivable exigency . . . a situation which had to be handled at once . . . Rusty turned to the star fullback.

“Well, what would you suggest?” he challenged.

“That we toss a coin to see who goes . . . and who plays!” proposed Bob, “We’ve told each other what we know. With this information, either one of us ought to be able to run down something!”

“But you—you’d be better in the game!” urged Rusty, feeling the pressure of the moment.

“We’re not debating that!” Bob rejoined, taking a half dollar from his pocket and hand-

ing it to a wide-eyed Norma. "Here, take this and toss it up. Let it fall where it will." Then to Rusty. "Who's calling. You or me?"

"Heads, I go!" cried the substitute fullback as the coin turned in the air. Norma's fling was high and to the side. The half dollar struck on the bed, edged up, wavered and fell flat.

"Tails it is!" announced Bob, "*I go!* . . . I'm grabbing a taxi down to this address. If I find anything that looks suspicious I'll pull the police in. I've got two hours before game time. With a break of luck I might still get to the Stadium in time for the game . . . but don't count on it. Rusty, old man, go in there and give 'em everything that you've got!"

The star fullback held out his hand. It was taken, this time, in a firm, well-wishing clasp.

"I'll do my damndest!" Rusty assured, grimly, "And I *know* you will!"

Bob leaped for the door. "Got that address?" he called back over his shoulder to Norma, "Thirty-six River! . . . Better phone it in to Mr. Naylor. It might suggest

something to him! . . . If you don't hear from me in a little more than an hour you'll know something's up!"

With this the star fullback was gone—Donald Williams, the American—to the rescue of his sweetheart—Pauline!

Norma and Rusty, pressing faces against the window, saw his bare-headed, athletic figure rush out into the rain and hail a cab and go diving into it, shouting orders as a quarterback would shout signals. The cab took on a spurt of speed and careened around the corner out of sight.

"There goes a fellow," spoke the substitute fullback, eyes suddenly moist, "That I've treated like a dog!"

"Why, Rusty!"

"Can't help it. It's the truth. How I've hated that guy! Seems like he's always been in the way of everything I've wanted to get." The words came swiftly, chokingly, as though they were being forced out by someone who was trying to unburden himself of the thoughts they expressed. "I tried to match his ability with mine," Rusty continued, "But I couldn't quite make it. So I began trying to beat him

other ways. The better showing he'd make, the sorer I'd get . . . and I was crazy to get a crack at playing fullback in a game where my playing might count for something. That's why I tried to lay Bob out . . .!"

Norma suppressed a shriek. "Oh, Rusty . . . no, you didn't . . .!"

The substitute fullback nodded bitterly.

"I knew Coach would have to give me a chance then. I was jealous of Bob . . . jealous of his being praised to the skies . . . you know something, Norma . . .?"

Anne's room-mate shook her head, steeling herself for she knew not what. The voluntary revelation had already been startling in the extreme. What else could Rusty have on his mind?

"You know, I—I really think, just between you and me" This confession was hard. It was coming more slowly. Rusty was biting his lips, hesitantly. "I—I don't care for Anne the way Bob thinks I do. The way you think I do. It was just the . . . well, the idea that I ought to be competing with Bob . . . trying to beat him out . . . I was bound I was going to whip him in something!

But I . . . I couldn't do it fair. I had to turn Anne against him by letting her think things that weren't so! . . . Remember that night you found me out in the alleyway?"

Norma nodded, eyes staring.

"You took me by surprise. I'd just barely come up and I'd been watching a couple across the campus, coming my way. I thought it was Anne and Bob . . . Naturally I didn't want Anne to think I'd intended spying on her, so I never really explained to her what I was doing out there. And I actually didn't see that man she said was standing where I was! He probably saw me, though, and beat it as I came up, looking the other way."

"Quite likely," agreed Norma, giving sympathetic attention.

"Oh, there's plenty I could tell you if I had the time. That fight Bob and I had in the play . . . I hit him first. But, when Bob got in that blow to my nose, it made him look like a roughneck to those who knew that the fight was the real thing. And that's what turned Anne against Bob completely. Funny! I thought I'd get a big kick out of beating him . . . out of having Anne to myself . . .

she's a wonderful girl and I think a lot of her . . . but, you know"

"I know," said Norma softly, placing a hand on Rusty's arm. "And I—I think you've just done a very brave thing."

The substitute fullback glanced at his watch. "Holy smoke! Twelve-twenty! Team's supposed to have left for the Stadium! I've got to be beating it. But, say—I feel like a new man now! I could lick my weight in tigers and lions! Norma, you're a peach! . . . I want to see you after the game! . . . Gee! I don't suppose you'll go, though, if Anne isn't found . . . !"

"I'm staying right here!" called Norma, "Till word comes. Oh, I've got to call Mr. Naylor! Goodbye, Rusty! . . . And *win that game!*"

CHAPTER XIV

ANXIOUS MOMENTS

To one fairly familiar with the island of Manhattan, which supports the city of New York proper, the business of finding one's way around became more a matter of routine than of mystery. Anne knew, therefore, without looking "36 River Street" up on the map, that she would have to take the crosstown surface car at Forty-Second Street to the Second Avenue Elevated and ride on it to Livingston stop where she was again obliged to change cars, boarding another crosstown surface car, this one taking her toward the East river. If she had remained on the car it would have carried her to the Williamsburg bridge but she got off several stops above and began a search for the short little River street which she knew started off Livingston and ended a few blocks further up.

"A miserable jumping off place to get to on such a day!" Anne told herself enroute.

Transportation facilities were slowed up by the weather which caused Anne to be twenty minutes late in arriving. But she was not the least disturbed at the possibility of Fairmount officials finding fault with this. Rather should they be astonished at sight of her at all.

The district in which Anne found herself was decidedly foreign and uncouth looking. It was just such a neighborhood, with its dilapidated buildings and its windows with battered, old-fashioned shutters that one might imagine as the stronghold of gangsters. Perhaps machine guns and small arsenals were hidden behind some of the dirty-paned windows, trained on the street or commanding a sweep of some worn stairway—ready to welcome the first suspicious visitor with a death-dealing rat-a-tat. Certainly those in this part of town were quite unaccustomed to seeing a girl, well-dressed as she was, and unattended, whether the time be high noon or midnight. Anne could tell this by the way they stuck their heads out of funny slits between buildings or from windows choked with all manner of pots, milk bottles, flower boxes and what nots. She was a walking curi-

osity . . . especially on a day like today, with the cold drizzle falling.

36 River Street was a three story red brick building with a high board fence on one side hiding from view great piles of junk. Behind the building, which appeared unoccupied from the street, was a yard which lost itself beneath a maze of odds and ends—battered relics of bygone days—what looked to be the auspicious start and disastrous finish of a hundred homes. Beyond the yard stretched the smudgy, smelly river front with its cluttered piers, its broken hulls of boats beached in shallow water, its greasy little shacks and its incongruous touches of respectability in the form of occasional decent-looking warehouses or shipping buildings.

“If they were looking for atmosphere they certainly found it here,” thought Anne, as she rapped on the door, “Whew!”

No answer.

Anne knocked again, feeling her heart commence to pound. Just why, she couldn't decide. There was really nothing to fear. She knew she could act. Of course, facing the camera would be different but then . . .

one had to 'emote' just the same. Didn't seem to be any sign of anyone around. Maybe the company was out, taking advantage of the bad weather to shoot a scene which required just such a day as this. She had read once of a movie cast pitching camp in the mountains where snow was supposed to fall every day . . . but this particular season the snow didn't fall though the company waited for Nature to produce it for three weeks . . . the director preferring the real thing for his scenic background.

"It feels almost chilly enough for this rain to turn into sleet or snow," said Anne, shivering, "I hope I haven't come all the way down here for nothing!"

As she raised her hand to rap again a face appeared at the window. A moment later a key turned in the lock and the door swung open, revealing a smiling Mr. Sylvester.

"Well, Miss Morgan! Step right in!" he welcomed, extending his hand, "Mighty glad to see you. So you found your way all right? I was in the back part of the building. We've a room fitted up there and are shooting interiors. Dismal day, isn't it?"

He had drawn her inside as he talked, shutting the door, but retaining hold of her hand, which she was finding increasingly embarrassing.

"Yes, I was really doubtful about coming," Anne replied, looking about her with interest and concern, "My, this is a gloomy place, isn't it?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," replied Mr. Sylvester, "It's a . . ."

Which was all that Anne heard for the time being because a gunny sack descended with such swiftness over her head that she had not even time to cry out. The next instant she felt her arms pinioned behind her and bound. And, following this, she was picked up and carried . . . it felt as though up a stairs . . . she couldn't quite make sure . . . finally being thrown down upon a crude cot in the corner of a room.

"Oh, I'm a fool! A fool!" she gasped, knowing better than to attempt a struggle.

She lay for some moments with the uncanny feeling that someone was in the room watching her, yet making no sound. She could almost feel eyes upon her though her own face was

masked so that she could not see. And the eyes she felt were a leering red, deep socketed eyes that burned with an unnatural lustre. She felt the presence of them so strongly that she finally cried out, her voice muffled by the gunny sack.

“Louie! . . . What are you doing?
. . . Let me go!”

A harsh laugh then . . . and footsteps. Lean, nervous fingers plucking the sack from her head . . . and the eyes she had felt, now looking down into hers.

“Hello, cousin!” grinned the face. “Thought you’d slip one over on me, didn’t you? . . . Well, say—I wasn’t quite the dumb-bell that you and Naylor thought I was! . . . Figured I’d never get wise that you were to come into five hundred thousand on your twenty-first birthday, eh? Handing me the line that your allowance stopped when you reached twenty-one! Telling me you wouldn’t get any more allowances. No! Why should you—with a nice little half-million hand-out?”

Anne’s astonishment was so great that her fears vanished momentarily.

“Why, Louie! That isn’t so! I’d have

known it if it was. What proof have you . . .?"

Louie's mouth twitched in a smirking smile.

"Proof . . . I got plenty. Went through your room for one . . . couldn't find what I wanted. You're pretty clever to hide things where *I* can't locate 'em. But it doesn't matter. I get the dope somewhere. All I did was to go down, crawl through the transom and open old Naylor's safe. You know how the old man's will reads? . . ."

"Only what Mr. Naylor has told me," said Anne, truthfully, "You know yourself that most of the clauses in it were secret . . ."

"Yeah—to *me!*" laughed Louie, "But not any more! . . . The old man didn't do so badly by me at that! Not when you consider the provision he made that the five hundred thousand was to come to me in case you should die before reaching the age of twenty-one!"

"Oh!" gasped Anne, "But, Louie—you're perfectly welcome to the money. I've never figured on it. I didn't know your father intended giving it to me. I don't want it. So you needn't hold anything against me for that!"

Louie looked puzzled.

“Well, law is law and you can’t get around that. But I’m going to give you a sporting chance. I got friends that’ll spend twenty-five thousand to get a split on half a million. That’s good business!”

“But, Louie, you wouldn’t kill me? You must be crazy!”

“I’m telling you—you’re going to get your chance. You’re going to frame a nice little suicide note and some of your things are going to be found on a pier . . . but you’re really going abroad for your health . . . stowed away on a freighter . . . and you’re never coming back—see! And you’re taking another name where we’re putting you off and you’re not making a peep to anybody . . . because if you do—goodbye forever!”

Anne’s terror mounted. Louie’s expression was demoniacal, that of a human whose conscience had been eaten away by overpowering forces. It was clearly apparent that reasoning with such a man would be of no avail. Might even infuriate him to more impossible procedures. Her only course, as she saw it, was that of attempting to humor him.

“Well, why keep me tied like this if that’s your plan?” she asked, “This cord is cutting into my wrists and the way I’m lying I’m anything but comfortable.”

Louie eyed her craftily.

“That’s your tough luck, cousin! Though I give you credit for being a very sensible little girl! Very sensible! . . . There’s a lot of interesting country on the other side of the pond. Won’t be so bad after you’ve knocked around over there awhile. And we’ll see that you’re never clean down and out.”

“How nice of you!” Anne couldn’t resist.

“Well, why not?” Louie retorted, with evident seriousness, “Won’t you be doing us a favor?”

This was a point of view to which Anne could not subscribe.

“You’re taking it easy here all day,” Louie continued, jauntily, “It’s too blame risky running you around this ‘no-man’s city’ in daylight. But tonight you hit the freighter and the salt breeze. Meanwhile I’m going to be plenty busy. The sack stays off if you don’t open your trap. How about it?”

“I—I’ll keep still,” Anne promised.

As Bob leaped into the taxi and shouted his destination to the driver, following up with a flood of words, all synonyms for "speed", the chauffeur looked at him queerly.

"Thirty-six River?" he repeated, "That's a tough neighborhood, chief! Good thing you're not going there at night!"

"Oh, it's all right," snapped the star full-back, "Why, there's supposed to be a movie company down there—shooting pictures!"

The driver laughed, as he spun the cab around a corner.

"Yeah? . . . That's a new one! Who said they were shooting *pictures*?"

At five minutes past one o'clock the star full-back jumped from the taxi half a block below the red brick building which the driver pointed out as "36 River".

"Be going back soon, chief?" he asked, as he pocketed three one dollar bills.

"I can't say," answered Bob, "Stick around if you care to. My next jump's the Yankee Stadium!"

The driver's mouth opened wide. "Well, brother, I'll just do a little cruising around the block on the strength of that!"

Bob hurried up the narrow street, sizing up his surroundings.

“Looks like rain’s letting up a bit,” he observed, “But I’ll bet at that, the field’s half under water! Boy, how I’d like to be out there! Looks like this blows my chance at the All-American!”

Attempting to peer through the dusky windows, Bob gave it up as a bad job and stepped to the door, rapping loudly. He noticed an immediate commotion inside and prepared for action. The door opened cautiously and, as it did, the star fullback shoved his broad shoe in the crack. An instant later he was face to face with the tall man he had seen in the reception room of Hadden House. But, more than this, he was also face to face with an automatic revolver which the gentleman held aimed at the region of his heart.

“Hello!” said Bob, easily, “Believe we’ve met before!”

The shorter of the two men now put in an appearance from a back room.

“Seems to me I’ve met you before, too!” greeted Bob.

The taller of the two looked puzzled but the

short man with the flashy ring, scrutinized Bob closely and broke out with an oath.

“Well, if it ain’t the boy friend!”

“Right!” answered Bob, “And I’ve come for the girl—get me? Turn her over p.d.q. and you don’t get in any trouble. I could have brought the police but I’m giving you birds a chance to come clean. This dive is known, though, and if I’m not back inside an hour you men are due to catch hell!”

The two make-believe movie directors exchanged consulting glances.

“Call Louie!” ordered the taller, in an undertone.

The short accomplice disappeared.

“So you came down here all by your sweet lonesome, eh?” jeered the tall man, “Well, that’s nice of you to go to all that trouble. We’ll see what we can do for you!”

Louie appeared, obviously disturbed by news of the bold intruder. Bob recognized him instantly from Rusty’s description and made the quick mental observation, “That guy’s a bad egg!”

“What you doing here?” demanded Louie.

“You know darn well what I’m doing here!”

Bob replied, in even tones which seemed to agitate the highly nervous Louie the more. "I'm calling for Miss Anne Morgan and unless she's surrendered at once it's going to go mighty hard with the bunch of you!"

Louie's eyes blazed insanely.

"Oh, it is, is it? Well, it's not going to go so soft with you! Tie him up!"

The short man advanced with a coil of rope, making a slip noose at one end. Bob, knowing himself to be in tight quarters, kept his eye on the gun. Three against one! He was more than a physical match for any two with the gun out of the equation. If he could somehow . . .!

"I'd advise you not to move!" came the warning.

But the star fullback did not heed it. He wheeled suddenly as the short man was about to slip the noose over his head, and, seizing his would-be lassoer, put the bogus movie director between him and his comrade with the gun.

"Don't shoot!" begged the short man, wide-eyed.

Louie, with animal-like swiftness, was in on

the two with the taller man circling. Bob tried to keep his back to the wall and edge around toward the door but his attackers came at him from two sides. He finally shoved the short man sprawling into Louie and dove for the hand of the third gangster, holding the gun.

“Why, you nervy . . . !”

With a quick wrench Bob tore the gun from the taller man’s grasp but as he did so a blow from a blunt object struck him a thudding crack behind the right ear. He slumped forward into flashing darkness, the pistol rattling to the floor while three badly worried thugs dropped upon him.

“Whew! He’s a tough baby!” panted the taller man, “Tie him up plenty.”

“And gag him!” ordered Louie, “Carry him upstairs and throw him in one of the front rooms!”

“Have to shanghai him, too!” speculated the short man, “Won’t do to let him get away!”

Louie wiped perspiration from his upper lip and tried to still the nervous twitching at the corner of his mouth.

“I don’t know!” he said, his face taking on

a haunted look, "This hole isn't going to be safe! We may have to get rid of 'em some other way."

"Such as what?"

"Leave it to me. I'll figure it out! Don't I always figure it out?"

"Yeah, but we ain't never been in a jam as big as this, Louie. Don't forget that! And if you're meaning to bump this kid and her boy friend off . . .!"

"Nix on that stuff. They'd burn us for it!" warned the taller man, "The shanghai biz is all right . . . but I didn't sign up for murder!"

"You're in it now and you're doing what I think's best to save our hides!" blazed Louie, "And if you don't and they get me—well, it wouldn't exactly be squealing when a pal's turned another down!"

"You . . .!" shot back the taller man. But he knelt, with a gesture of abandon, to help carry the unconscious form of the star fullback to a place of seclusion.

CHAPTER XV

A DUAL BATTLE

“WHERE’S Rusty and Bob?”

Members of the Bartlett squad, gathering by the curb outside the Ritz Hotel shortly after twelve noon, set up the cry. Coach Edwards, hurrying out, ready to give the signal for the bus to be off to the Yankee Stadium, stopped short, astounded.

“What? . . . They missing? And I told none of you fellows to leave your hotel rooms!”

“They both got telephone calls, sir,” informed Big Jim, “One right after the other . . . and they set off like streaks without telling us where they were going . . . except that they’d be back!”

Coach Edwards looked at his watch. “It’s twelve-eighteen now! We wait till twelve-thirty, then we leave without them!”

By twelve-twenty-five the coach and team members were badly worried.

“You don’t suppose it’s some sort of a ruse

Pennington's pulled on us, do you?" suggested quarterback Chapin, suspiciously.

"Not that," said the coach, anxiously, "But it might easily be possible that a gambling ring, with money up on Pennington, would try to put the game on ice!"

"If that's what's happened!" boiled Big Jim, "Well, boys—we'll just naturally *have* to lick Pennington!"

At twelve-thirty sharp the figure of the substitute fullback was sighted running through the rain, crossing the street with traffic signals set against him, dodging in between mud-spattered cars with their drivers telling him, in no uncertain sort of language, how much they loved him.

"There's Rusty!" cried Bartlett team members, almost in one voice.

Gasping for breath, the substitute fullback dashed up, stumbling against the side of the bus for support as fellow players crowded about him.

"Anne's missing!" he announced.

"Anne who?"

"Anne Morgan! . . . Looks like foul play . . . Bob's following a clue!"

Hurriedly Rusty acquainted the coach and team with the situation, insisting that Bob still hoped to reach the stadium in time for play. Coach Edwards' feelings knew no bounds. He was too exasperated for words. To begin with—the story of Anne's disappearance sounded like a lot of "hooey." Why should anyone be alarmed because a girl was a half to three-quarters of an hour late in keeping an appointment? Why a woman's average was a good hour behind time! At least he could vouch for a few with that record. From all indications Bob Delano had rushed madly off on a wild goose chase, thus practically forfeiting his team's chances of winning the national championship. But there was no use crying over what was spilt on the table cloth now! Bartlett would have to make the best of it and it would be his sweet little task of trying to uphold the team's morale!

The Yankee Stadium, ordinarily a steel structure of wonderment, presented a sorry spectacle to the huge throng which moved slowly and damply into its confines this late afternoon in November. The once pretty buntings, hung from the steel framework of the con-

verted baseball yard, were drooping and dripping. Fans thronging into the exposed unreserved section carried rolls of newspapers to put under and above them. A particularly disgruntled occupant of a field box, in tipping the water off his chair, remarked that the Yankee Stadium looked as wet and bleak as the flattened out hide of a water spaniel. Rivulets of water were running down the concrete aisles and pools stood in the boxes. As for the field, especially the infield around pitcher's box where so many hurlers had met their Waterloo trying to sneak them past Babe Ruth—most of the water was still there, with more added to it, the diamond resembling a first class bog. The outfield was not so bad except that the grass glistened with water and the footing, according to quarterback Chapin, was "as slippery as the floor of a public dance hall."

And still the crowd came, with scornful disregard for the weather. The first to crash the gate, it was reported, was One Eyed Connolly, a personage always supposed to be needed to make a real sport occasion complete. After him trailed and stamped and fumed and pushed close to eighty-five thousand pairs of rubbers

and galoshes, with about the same number of umbrellas, slickers and blankets. A regular invasion! And, at the very tail-end, due to arrive about the middle of the first quarter, was Mayor Jimmy Walker and party!

Coaches Durgan of Pennington and Edwards of Bartlett kept their squads off the field until almost ten minutes before game time when the players were sent out to scamper cautiously about, wearing hooded garments, accustoming themselves to the juicy condition underfoot and roughing up the sod a bit so there wouldn't be quite so much sliding during the battle.

Almost simultaneously with the appearance of the teams, the Pennington and Bartlett bands appeared from opposite ends of the field and waded to the center where they met, shaking the rain off their instruments and joining ranks to play each other's college songs. The bands brought a howl when they blared out the number, "How Dry I Am!" which struck the folks in the stands as a pathetic attempt at humor. And the heavens opened up with an extra heavy downpour which fogged the notes and sent the bandsmen scampering, out of

alignment, to sheltered places under the stadium roof.

All in all it was perfect football weather—the kind Michigan had when her undefeated eleven went up against Northwestern and lost out in a weird game, 3 to 2, with the ball actually floating away at times and players being treated for submersion.

With the starting line-ups on the field, a gasp of surprise went up at discovery that Coach Edwards' was holding back the great Bob Delano.

"Maybe he figures Rusty will show up better on this kind of a field," guessed a Bartlett rooter.

"But I don't even see Bob on the bench!" cried another.

This, however, could not be exactly verified because the men were so wrapped in blankets it was almost impossible to determine who was who.

"You can bet your life Coach Edwards knows what he's doing, at any rate!" supported an ardent admirer.

And little more was thought about the absence in the excitement of the game's begin-

ning. As the referee's whistle sounded, Pennington rooters let loose their trench mortar yell, ending with a booming blast from a small cannon which sent up such a vibration that it seemed to spill more rain from the clouds.

"Oh, what a day for a funeral!" said somebody.

"Yeah, whose do you mean?" challenged a fan nearby, "Bartlett's or Pennington's?"

And before the first quarter was over the answer was, "Bartlett's!" For one thing, Pennington won the toss and chose to defend the end of the field that was in the best condition which meant that, changing ends every quarter, Pennington had the baseball diamond, now practically under water, directly in front of their goal for the second and fourth quarters. What better natural defense could be asked than that? High-handed strategy, this! Coach Durgan was wise enough to realize that the going would be twice as hard in the oozy mud at the diamond end and decided he'd rather have Bartlett floundering in the mire, trying to get back a Pennington lead in the last quarter (the fates willing) than his own

team, in a like predicament (heaven forbid!)

Bartlett kicked off and Pennington, on the best end of the field, pushed the ball back to their forty yard line with King Moulton carrying the pigskin every other play. Then the Bartlett line held and Moulton dropped a long, beautifully placed punt, smack in a small lagoon on Bartlett's seven yard line. There was nothing for Bartlett to do but kick and Rusty, standing back behind his own goal, almost slipped and fell as he toed the ball. His kick only soared to Bartlett's thirty-seven yard line and the crowd groaned. But Pennington couldn't do anything in the mud and King Moulton tried a field goal which went wild. The first quarter then resolved itself into a punting duel with Pennington getting the better of the exchanges until about four minutes from the end when Pennington cut loose with a terrific offensive. By this time the players on both teams were so black and smeared that their jerseys looked all one color. And the ball had to be wiped off with a towel after each play. But just as the whistle screeched for the end of the first quarter, Pennington crashed through for a first down on

Bartlett's twenty-nine yard line, at the very edge of the muddy sector!

"What luck!" moaned a Bartlett supporter, "Now they change goals and get the good end of the field to work on!"

Which was precisely as the Pennington coach had figured, just to prove that dreams sometimes came true.

The star fullback regained consciousness, his mouth dry and distended, a throbbing sensation at the back of his head. He was lying on his side in a darkened, dirty room . . . hands tied behind his back, ankles wound with cord, a knotted handkerchief in his mouth. There was not a sound save a faint ticking . . . ticking . . . ! What was that? . . . Perhaps an infernal machine! . . . Bob gasped with relief—only his wrist watch. It hadn't been removed. What time must it be? He hadn't the slightest idea. He might have been unconscious hours or minutes. The watch had a phosphorescent dial . . . if he could only roll over a little more and pull his arm to the side . . . and twist his head. Bob maneuvered, taking a quick glance.

“Two o’clock!” he moaned. “Game time! . . . I wonder what they’ve done with Anne! . . . Boy, if I’m not being held for downs now!”

Bob tugged testily at the bonds which held his wrists and also at the ropes wound securely about his ankles. He found he could get good leg action except for the fact that it would be practically impossible to more than stand on his feet. Any progress would have to be made by jumping along and this would be too precarious. The most offensive thing of all was this rag in his mouth. It was choking and gagging him.

“I’ve got to get out of this dump somehow!” said Bob, desperately, “But how?”

Time crawled slowly past. Two-fifteen . . . two-twenty-five . . . minutes in which Bob had squirmed, with much painful effort, to a sitting position against the wall. And then, for the first time, he heard a man’s voice. It seemed to be coming from across the street . . . an excited voice . . . mixed with yells. Maybe the police were coming! Bob strained forward. Now the voice was clearly audible.

“Believe you me, folks! This boy King Moulton is one whale of a football player! And I don’t mean maybe!”

The veins in Bob’s temples bulged.

“Graham MacNamee!” he cried. “Somebody’s tuned in on the game!”

Walking on his knees, as noiselessly as possible, Bob edged to the window, which was barred, and rubbed a spot on the pane clean with his nose, so that he could see through. A squalid looking building met his gaze with a window open on the third floor and a loud speaker peeking out.

“It’s in a pool room!” discovered the star fullback. “Gee, this is great!”

“It certainly is wet!” came MacNamee’s familiar voice. “This weather doesn’t compare with that of old California. I tell you, folks, I can’t ever forget my experience in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena and the sight of those gorgeous mountains! But here we are in the Yankee Stadium, New York, entirely surrounded by rain. Oh! Oh! Phil says not entirely . . . there’re some pretty girls near us. But anyway, the two teams have changed ends of the field and are lining up again for

the start of the second quarter—in row boats. That's what they should be in, and I don't mean maybe! Boy, oh boy! Ha! Ha! Ha! Phil says he wouldn't play out there in that sea of mud today if you rolled up the Yankee Stadium and put it in his pocket! Hello, Knute! What do you know? There's my old friend Knute Rockne. Quite a ball game, eh what? Knute shakes his head. There's politics for you. He's reporting for one of the papers and he won't commit himself over the air. . . . All right, folks, get ready . . . second quarter coming up . . . score still nothing to nothing. . . . Pennington's ball with a first down on Bartlett's twenty-nine yard line . . . !”

Bob gasped.

“. . . stay with me, everybody. . . . I'm going to give you the play by play as long as my tonsils hold out . . . !”

Taking up their drive where they had left off, Pennington, with King Moulton plunging through the line and off the ends, slipping, sliding, smashing . . . gaining two, four, six and eight yards at a clip . . . kept to even

numbers until the ball arrived at Bartlett's one yard mark.

"Hold 'em!" begged Bartlett.

But the entire Bartlett squad and half New York's police force couldn't hold the rampaging Pennington eleven now. They tore through the line with an impact that was heard above Graham MacNamee's voice by ten million listeners-in and by one frenzied listener-in in particular, who rolled his head in an agony of helplessness.

"Looks like Bartlett's going to need Mr. Bob Delano pretty badly soon," said Graham. "Phil and I have been trying to figure Coach Edwards' strategy in keeping Bob out this long and Phil suggests they're probably saving him for the dance after the game. But I hardly believe this. Anyhow, this is the second quarter, folks, and Pennington's just scored a touchdown and there goes a . . . oh, a beautiful place-kick by King Moulton for the extra point . . . making the score seven to nothing in favor of the muddiest team. . . . Ha! Ha! You get what I mean? . . . Hear those Bartlett rooters howl for Bob now! . . . This Rusty Milburn, subbing for him,

hasn't been so hot . . . but then, his team hasn't had a chance at the ball so much, either . . . and there's no known way yet how an eleven can advance with the pigskin if they haven't got it. That right, Phil? . . . Ha! Ha! It's sort of like the Giants trying to score with the Cards at bat. It's just one of those impossible things. Say! . . . You ought to see this! The Bartlett stands are in an uproar! They're all on their feet, shouting their heads off! Get that noise? . . . They're demanding of Coach Edwards that he send Bob Delano in! Wait a minute, I'll let the mike pick it up for you!"

There followed a moment's crackling silence. Then a volume of entreating sound.

"WE WANT BOB! . . . WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH DELANO? . . . GIVE US BOB!"

And, some ten miles from the Yankee Stadium, a gagged and bound figure, locked in a poorly lighted room, struggled mightily but in vain to break his shackles in answer to the summons!

"Ladies and gentlemen!" broke in Mac-

Namee, excitedly, "there appears to be a sensation breaking out here! Coach Edwards has told Bartlett's cheer leaders something that they're announcing to the crowd . . . and he's pointing to the bench and shaking his head. No, no! He can't send Bob Delano in! Question—why? Because Bob Delano isn't *on* the bench! . . . He isn't anywhere to be seen! . . . Next question—if he isn't here, where is he? What's happened? . . . The coach is shrugging his shoulders. He doesn't know! . . . Nobody seems to know! . . . Oh, folks! Something mysterious about this! . . . If it's on the level . . .? Yes, Phil says he's got it straight. . . . Bob's disappeared. Dropped out of sight just before game time. And is Pennington happy? . . . Boy, they're trying to look glum about it . . . you know what I mean—good sports—but they just can't help being tickled at their team's not having to face Bartlett's raging tornado! And I don't know as I blame them—much! This Delano fellow's a pip and no mistake. . . . Well, it looks like we'll have to add a detective to our staff

after this! . . . Say, the Bartlett colors are sure drooping now and it's not all on account of the rain! . . ."

With the taxi business none too good and long hauls almost as scarce as straw hats after September 15th, the driver carrying a fare to "36 River" with prospects of another lift to the Yankee Stadium, decided it well worth while to spend as much as an hour in the vicinity with hopes of making another lucrative pick-up. But, after cruising around for an hour and a half, the driver was about to conclude that his party had either eluded him or wasn't coming out. At any rate, what would be the harm in sailing past the address once more and even giving a reminding toot on the horn?

Looking out the window at sound of the siren Bob started at recognition of the man at the wheel of the taxi. He had slowed his machine down to a crawl and was looking toward the red brick building intently. If he could only attract his attention! . . . Raising up on his knees, head above the window sill, Bartlett's star fullback lowered his head and dashed

it against the pane. There followed the sound of shattered glass and an involuntary shriek which seemed to come from the next room. With blood streaming from a gash over one eye, Bob saw the taxi man start, lean from his cab and peer upward. Then, holding his breath with hope, he saw the driver shift his gears into high and step on the gas!

Footsteps sounded outside the door. Lying down quickly on his back, feigning exhaustion, Bob awaited whoever might enter, muscles tense. The lock clicked and the door swung open. Through half-shut eyelids and by the light let in from the hall, Bob could see that the figure was that of Louie.

“What you up to?” demanded Anne’s cousin, viciously. “Trying to call help, eh? . . . How’d you break that window? Kick it out? Let’s see your feet!”

The taller man appeared in the doorway.

“Hurry it up, Louie! Mark’s waiting for us with the launch. I just signalled him from in back!”

“All right! Did you touch a match to that pile in the basement?”

“No, I—I thought you . . .” started the

accomplice, nervously. "God, Louie! You wouldn't burn them alive?"

"Can I help it if they can't get out in time?" cried the fiend. "Where's Smalley with those kerosene rags? . . . Have him bring 'em up here right away! . . . We got to get out of here!"

The taller man disappeared, his footsteps clattering down the stairs. Louie, to satisfy himself that his captive might have no chance of getting away, bent over the prostrate form for a hasty examination of the shackled feet. It was, perhaps, the most unwise move he ever made.

Trained to a degree of hair-trigger finesse in kicking, even though his prone position now severely handicapped him, the star fullback, gauging his distance . . . visualizing the face that hovered over him as a grimy surfaced football and enduring the agonizing pressure on his arms pinioned beneath him, Bob brought his legs up from the waist in a terrific, swinging arc. The toes of his shoes caught the unsuspecting Louie flush on the jaw, snapping his head back and lifting him from his feet, to land him with a thud against the wall.

There was not an instant's time to lose. Crawling over on his knees, Bob, back to Louie's unconscious form, felt for his pockets and along his waist line under the coat. If Louie only carried a knife of some sort. He did! A dagger! Drawing it from its sheath beneath his vest, Bob worked the blade of it up between the tightly wound strands of rope. He felt the knife cut the cheek of one palm but persisted, working it back and forth against the rope by pressure of his fingers on the handle. The dagger, thanks to its razor sharpness, cut through the strands quickly. His first act, on getting his hands free, was to jerk the knotted handkerchief from his mouth. His tongue and lips were swollen from the pressure and his mouth almost unbearably dry and stiff. Stooping, Bob liberated his feet with one stroke. As he did so his nostrils caught the smell of smoke.

"Louie!" shouted a voice.

Footsteps dashing up the stairs. Both accomplices coming up this time.

"Louie!"

Crouching by the door, in the dim light, the star fullback felt his nerves tingle as the tall

and short man reached the head of the stairs and looked in, mistaking Louie's inert body as that of the "boy friend."

"Where is Louie? Maybe he went down the back stairs! Skipped out and left us holding the bag!" cried the taller man, stepping in to glance around.

"Not here!" confirmed the short man. "Let's beat it! This place'll be a fire trap in another five minutes!"

A shadow shot between the two and the door, the door slamming shut as though from a sudden draft. But it wasn't a draft for the door proved unyielding to frantic efforts to open it. It was locked!

"Gad!" cried the taller man, looking down at the figure on the floor, "This isn't the boy friend! It's Louie!"

"Anne!" Bob tried to shout, but his throat gave forth no sound.

The door next the room in which he had been confined was locked and the key gone. A billow of smoke came rushing up the stairs. Putting his shoulder against the door, Bartlett's star fullback all but tore it from its hinges with

a tremendous heave. Inside he glimpsed a cot and on it . . . !

“Bob! . . . Thank God!”

Fearfully of making outcry, Anne had been trying to decipher the meaning of certain sounds which had come to her. The smell of smoke had added to her terror. Rushing over, Bob slashed the ropes from her wrists and ankles and lifted her from the cot, carrying her into the hall.

“Oh!”

A choking wave of smoke met them. Holding Anne’s head close to him, Bob felt his way down the stairs while, locked in the room above, three desperadoes hammered madly on the door and shrieked for help.

At the outer door of the building the star fullback, with his precious burden, was met by a half dozen policemen.

“Three men . . . locked in room . . . upstairs!” he gasped, and set Anne upon her feet as he lurched and almost fell. A policeman caught and steadied him. Other coppers raced into the building, the lower floor of which was now blazing furiously.

Fire apparatus arrived within the next minute and firemen ran a ladder up to the window where the men were held captive, the three being taken out in this manner as rescuers within were forced to turn back. The trio was immediately placed under handcuffs. One of them, nursing a badly bruised face, was greeted knowingly by a detective. "Hello, if here isn't our old friend—Louie, the Dope!"

"Well, chief!" grinned the industrious taxi driver, elbowing his way through a fast gathering crowd, "You ready for that trip to the Stadium?"

Bob glanced anxiously at Anne, then at his wrist watch.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"I—I'm all right," she assured, "Just a little shaky!"

"I—I don't know as there's much use of my trying to make it," considered the star full-back, "First half must be up now. . . . But we can try!"

"Oh, Bob!" cried Anne, catching sight of a familiar figure pressing toward her, "Here's Mr. Naylor!"

"My dear girl!" cried the lawyer, with great

solicitude, "I got here as quickly as I . . ."

"Oh, please!" restrained Anne, catching his arm, "Mr. Naylor, this is Bob Delano, star of our team and he's got to get out to the Stadium right away. Will you take charge of things? See us later at the hotel?"

"Go right ahead!" urged Mr. Naylor, hurrying with them to the street, followed by the taxi driver.

As the two clambered into the cab, lawyer Naylor called to the captain of police who had driven up in his car.

"Captain! This young man is Bob Delano! He's just taken part in the rescue of a young lady . . . and he's due at the Yankee Stadium to play with his team. Could you provide him with motorcycle escort?"

"Well, can I?" exclaimed the captain.

And so it was that the Stadium-bound couple left the scene of the near-disaster preceded by the sputtering roar of two motorcycles!

CHAPTER XVI

THE RACE AGAINST TIME

THE gloom experienced by dazed Bartlett rooters at realization that their star, Bob Delano, was not only missing from the line-up but also from the bench, deepened to an indigo hue as the game progressed, with Pennington, the threat of Bob's injection in the contest removed, gaining steadily in power.

Kicking off to Bartlett following their first touchdown, Pennington splashed down the field to stop an over-anxious Rusty Milburn who had fumbled the wet ball almost on his team's goal line. Forced to punt out of danger at once, Bartlett surrendered the pigskin and Pennington started another smashing march, with her star, King Moulton, doing the heaviest work. He was certainly up to his advance notices, being good for at least two yards every time he was called upon.

A minute before the end of the first half, King added to his reputation by pounding

through for his second touchdown, tacking on the extra point with another perfect place kick. The Pennington stands commenced singing a solemn requiem in honor of their late lamented rivals, as if the poor Bartlett supporters weren't taking enough punishment as it was—what with the rain and the missing Bob Delano and the spectacle of their undefeated idols in the process of being slaughtered!

The fifteen minutes intermission between halves seemed that many ages to eighty-five thousand damp and chilly humans, and especially so to the downhearted Bartlett sector. Fourteen to nothing at the half! Think of it? What would it be at the finish? Some tried to warm up and pep up by burying their grief in hot dogs slithered with mustard. The effect was only temporary.

“Any news of Bob?” asked Bartlett team members, almost to a man, as they stumbled wearily from the field. There was a desperate hopefulness in the voices. If ever their star fullback was needed, he was needed now. But Coach Edwards only shook his head and ordered the players, stuccoed in mud, to peel off their sopping wet togs, take a shower and climb

into new, dry outfits. For once in his career, appreciating the terrible playing conditions his men were laboring under as well as the shock of Bob's disappearance, Coach Edwards had not the heart to offer so much as a reprimand. His secret wonderment was that Pennington did not possess a bigger lead. Bartlett was being outplayed but not outgamed.

As the squad prepared to leave the dressing room for the start of the second half, the phone rang loud and persistently.

"Someone's got a wrong number!" said quarterback Chapin, "Let her ring!"

Coach Edwards, however, acting on a hunch, strode back and took down the receiver.

"Hello! . . . Bartlett dressing room!"

"Hello!" said a feminine voice, "Who is this talking, please?"

"Coach Edwards! What is it? What do you want?"

"Oh, has the second half begun yet?"

"No, in about three minutes. Why?"

"Well, then, could I speak to Rusty Milburn?"

"Rusty Milburn!" Players stopped in the doorway. The coach's voice grew harsh.

"Sorry, young lady! My men have too much on their minds to talk to girls between halves."

"Oh, but Coach . . . I just wanted to tell Rusty that Bob was on his way to the game!"

"WHAT? . . . Say that again!" Coach Edwards' eyes gleamed.

"Pardon me. This is Norma Packard speaking. . . . I was calling Rusty because he knows. . . . You see . . ."

"Never mind about the details. Where's Bob now?"

"I don't know exactly. You see I've been here at the hotel waiting. . . ."

"Time is short, Miss Packard. Where did Bob leave from and how is he coming out here? Can you tell me that?"

"He left from down on River Street, wherever that is . . . and he's coming by taxi with a police escort."

"Fine!"

"And he's bringing Anne Morgan with him! Please tell Rusty!"

"I'll do that. You bet your sweet little life! Miss Packard, whether you realize it or not, you've just done a big thing for your college!"

"Why, I don't know, I . . . I just knew how worried Rusty was about Anne and Bob. I'm leaving for the game right now myself! You see I couldn't leave here until . . ."

The referee stuck his head in the door.

"Snap it up in here! One minute!"

"Second half!" explained the coach, abruptly, "See you later!" He banged up the receiver and, though supposedly middle-aged, negotiated a jig dance.

"You fellows hear?" he shouted, "Bob's on the way! Be here any minute! What are you going to do about that?"

"You watch us!" cried Big Jim Baker, grinning from ear to ear.

And the Bartlett stands, sensing something in the air besides the cold drizzle by the manner in which their team came sloshing determinedly back on the field, greeted the eleven with a tremendous cheer.

Following the two speeding motorcycle policemen, the taxi bearing Bartlett's star full-back on a race against time to the Yankee Stadium from far down on New York's east side, careened madly as it hit uneven spots in

the pavement or veered sharply. So many times did the constant jolting throw Bob and the young lady accompanying him together that, before many blocks, they decided it was the better part of wisdom to stay together—so Bob placed his arm about her.

The taxi driver glanced back, grinning gleefully.

“Maybe I’m not getting a kick out of this!” he shouted, “Giving these traffic cops the dizzy go-by after all the times they’ve hollered at my hitting twenty miles per!”

Whizzing west on Livingston to Third Avenue, the taxi sped along under the Elevated Structure, angling off until it reached Fourth Avenue at Union Square. It was during this part of the journey that Anne, as they bumped along, gasped out an explanation of Louie’s actions with regard to her, saying that she now knew him to have been influenced by drugs.

“If this money does come to me,” she said, “I’ll spend any amount of it in sending Louie to a Sanitarium and seeing if he can be cured.”

Racing on, with Fourth Avenue changing in name to Park, the screaming sirens of the motorcycle police opened up magic lanes in

traffic lines which looked solid. Throngs, crowding the curbs, stared curiously after the lurching yellow cab with the fellow and girl bouncing around inside it.

"Some alderman's son was just married!" guessed a veteran New Yorker.

"Look at that car slue!" cried another, "That speed on those wet pavements is *some* dangerous!"

Watching the store fronts flicker past, Anne suddenly clutched Bob's arm and pointed.

"That radio shop—quick!"

She had seen a crowd of men gathered about the front window as though greatly interested. Near the top of the window a large, white sheet of paper was pasted. Bob leaned from the taxi as it dashed by, straining his eyes to read the scrawled figures written in heavy blue crayon. What he saw brought forth a groan of dismay.

First Half—

PENNINGTON 14

BARTLETT 0

"Looks like we're sunk!" he said, glumly, "The third quarter's probably under way now and . . .!"

Bob was interrupted by the grinding of brake bands as the taxi neared the Thirty-fourth street intersection. The motorcycle cops had signalled for a stop as the street ahead was blocked—no possible way of getting through—street cars, on the cross-town line, one behind the other as far as the eye could see, east and west on Thirty-fourth, all due to a traffic accident on Fifth Avenue. One of the motorcycle police pushed back to the cab.

“We’ve hit a bad jam,” he said, “Can’t back out or go forward.”

Bob debated. Every second at a standstill was time never to be regained.

“We’ve got to keep going!” he cried, “What’s the matter with our getting out, sneaking between the street cars and grabbing a cab on the other side?”

“Slick!” endorsed the copper, “Come on! I’ll park the cycle and ride out on your running board!”

Bob helped Anne from the taxi and the two, led by the officer, started wending their way between the line of cars on foot.

“Can’t stop to settle now!” he called back

to the driver, "See me tonight at the Ritz Hotel!"

"Tonight?" stormed one who had become his loyal supporter, "If this jam breaks quick enough I'm going to see you play the game!"

Interested onlookers along the street and occupants of cars, honking their protest at the long tie-up, watched an athletically built young man and an exceedingly good looking, though somewhat disheveled young lady, crawl through between two crosstown surface cars, followed by the motorcycle cop escorting them, who had left his machine in charge of his blockaded comrade.

Another cab was instantly hailed and commandeered by the policeman who, mounting the running board, ordered the driver to "hit her up for the Stadium!" as he blew his whistle and waved to clear the street ahead.

"Whew!" cried Anne, "What a trip!"

But the star fullback, once more on the way, had thoughts only for team-mates, wallowing grimly in the mud, and a game that was being lost.

"Fourteen to nothing!" he repeated, "A two touchdown lead on a day like this! All

they've got to do now is fall back on defensive and if they can't *more* than hold that lead—they're not the team I think they are!"

This opinion concurred with that of a rabid fan who declared at half time that "considering the spongy condition underfoot, Pennington's margin over Bartlett was as formidable as the Yanks being out in front, 15 to 1, with Herbie Pennock pitching!"

And yet the Bartlett stands had given their eleven a resounding cheer to start off the second half! Here was pathetic optimism for you! Bartlett responded, however, with a determined drive which Pennington met, as had been surmised, with a stiff defense. But Bartlett team members, buoyed up by the momentary expectation of their star fullback's arrival, fought with a fury which taxed Pennington's utmost to repulse.

"Get in there, you guys!" Quarterback Chapin shouted, "Hold that line! . . . Hold her for Bob! . . ."

But the third quarter dragged on and on, with leg weary warriors dragging themselves more and more slowly out of the mud after every play and—still no Bob!

Streaking up Park Avenue to One Hundred and Eleventh Street, the second cab to contain the hundred eighty pound cargo of football dynamite labeled for "special rush delivery" to the Yankee Stadium, made a sharp, two wheeled turn west to Seventh Avenue which all but tossed the police officer from the running board.

"Careful on those turns!" warned the copper.

The streets uptown were much clearer of traffic permitting an increase of speed. Anne, leaning forward, wide-eyed, fingers to lips, watched the indicator on the speedometer waver between forty . . . forty-five . . . fifty . . . fifty-two . . . fifty . . . forty-eight . . . !

"What would happen if we had to stop quickly on this wet pavement?" she asked Bob, anxiously.

The star fullback grinned.

"Slide, Kelly, slide!" he answered, "But who wants to stop? . . . Say, we're eating up distance now! I might be able to get in the last quarter at that!"

"Oh, I hope so! . . . I'll always feel

badly that you had to miss playing anyway. To think of Bartlett's being handicapped this way on account of me! . . ."

"You couldn't help that," reassured Bob, "Oh, yes—and I ought to tell you, Anne. . . . Rusty might have been the one to go after you just as well as me. You see, when Norma got in touch with us and we compared notes and decided one of us should investigate . . . we hit on the idea of tossing a coin to see who'd stay with the team and who'd go."

Anne nodded, moved. "And Rusty lost?"

"Well, he just drew the other job, that's all," said the star fullback, feeling a sense of remorse, "Anne, I want to apologize for the things I said about Rusty. I guess we all make mistakes . . . and we can't ever figure whether we'd even do as good in someone else's shoes. But I got acquainted with the real Rusty this afternoon . . . and he—he's made me ashamed of myself!"

Anne's eyes were moist. "Both of you have been wonderful to me," she replied, "I don't know how I can ever . . .!"

"Look out!"

The motorcycle policeman crouched on the

running board as the taxi driver reached madly for his emergency brake. Glancing forward, Bob saw that they were nearing One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street, a busy intersection and that a car had started across Seventh Avenue, the driver of which, sighting the speeding taxi, had tried to stop that it might have the right of way, only to have skidded directly in front.

With the brakes applied, and wheels locked, the taxi lurched sickeningly, the tires shrieking along the wet pavement as the machine slid toward the stalled car.

Certain a crash was unavoidable, the policeman left the running board in a flying leap, struck the street feet first, slipped, fell heavily, and rolled to the curb.

Anne, shrinking back in the seat, closed her eyes, and shielded her face with her arms, awaiting fearsomely the impact. Bob had just time to throw his body in front of hers as a measure of protection when the crash came.

The taxi hit the passenger automobile broadside with a jolting, grinding smash which splintered the windshield, flattened the bumpers, burst the radiator, blew the front tires and

pitched Anne and Bob violently forward.

For a moment the two of them lay, stunned. Then excited cries came from outside and hands wrenched at the car doors to get at them.

“You hurt, Anne?”

Bob struggled to lift her up. She opened her eyes and looked about.

“Oh, is it all over? . . . Yes, I’m all right. Oh, Bob! Isn’t this the worst luck? You’ll never get to the game now!”

CHAPTER XVII

FOR THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP!

"WHAT kind of bunk was Coach handing us about Bob's coming?" growled Big Jim Baker, left guard, as he dragged himself to the other end of the field in the intermission between quarters.

"That's what I want to know!" snapped Slim Tyler, "Way I got it figured—that phone call was a frame-up to give us fight!"

"Boy, I haven't got enough left to pull another shoe out of the mud!" groaned Crutch Edgecombe.

"Is Pennington tough?" snorted Ed Raymond, "Man, I've hit every spot on their line, trying to find something soft. I'd just as soon buck a brick building!"

Quarterback Chapin gave a helping hand to the substitute fullback who stumbled drunkenly along, head hanging, face streaked, hair matted with mud.

"Rusty, old boy, you've earned your spurs

today!" he encouraged, "The way you've hit that line!"

The substitute fullback shook his head, despondently.

"Me! . . . That's the trouble. . . . I haven't done a thing! . . . I've lost this game for you! . . . If Bob had only been . . ."

"What's the matter with you?" broke in Big Jim, lurching over, "You've played a whale of a game!"

"Have I made a touchdown?" demanded the substitute fullback, crazily.

"Has anybody else?" retorted a hobbling Stew Anderson.

"Bob makes touchdowns!" answered the substitute fullback, inconsolably.

"Let him alone. He's goofy!" decided Quarterback Chapin, "All right, guys! It's our ball on their forty yard line. Let's see if we can get beyond that thirty yard mark this time! Come on! We've got a kick left! Come on!"

Like a coxswain urging the oarsmen in his shell on, quarterback Chapin pleaded, berated and exhorted—striving to get the last ounce of

drive from his tired crew over the last lap of an actually watery course, even though the rival shell remained a good two lengths ahead. Bartlett must save a little something from the wreckage of fallen hopes.

“Get in there, Rusty! . . . Heads up! . . .”

“You want Bob! You don’t want me!”

And the slimy pigskin spanked against his stomach as the substitute fullback came reeling through for two, three . . . four yards!

“Yea, Rusty!” A spark of life still in the Bartlett stands, a very faint spark.

Fourth down. Ball on Pennington’s thirty-four yard line. Still four yards to go for a first down. But, from here on the course looked like an impassable morass ahead. Ankle deep mud and dirt-blackened human elephants kneeling in it, facing them grinningly, tauntingly, mockingly . . .! “Try to get past us!” they challenged, “We’ll sink you, shell and all!”

Quarterback Chapin looked intreatingly toward the sidelines. What should he do? No sign of Bob . . . The star fullback wasn’t

coming! The last quarter was seven minutes gone. Might as well try to save Bartlett the added humiliation of being held scoreless.

"Hold that line!" begged quarterback Chapin, and led the tottering Rusty back to as firm a spot as he could find, kneeling just ahead of him, hands outstretched. "All right, Rusty! . . . Give us three points, old boy! Boot her over!"

The Bartlett stands came to life with a roar.

"Oh, Anne!"

"Norma!"

"Did you see it?"

"Yes! I was just coming down to my seat! . . . Oh, wasn't it wonderful? Good work, Rusty!"

"Anne, you're a sight! I just got here myself. How are you? Where's Bob?"

"He ought to be on the field any second. I left him at the player's entrance! There he comes! See!"

"But he isn't dressed to play!"

"TIME OUT!" Quarterback Chapin shrieked the request at the referee as eighty-five thousand humans came to their feet with the thrill of an electric shock. Bob Delano had

arrived. He was over at the Bartlett bench now, being mobbed by joy-crazed substitutes. On the field, dropping in the mud to take full advantage of the short "time out" period, other Bartlett warriors grinned their happiness and hugged each other. Pennington rooters looked on charitably . . . wonderingly. Why should Bartlett be so excited? A little thing like a field goal didn't get them anywhere. And even a Bob Delano at this stage of the game would be like locking the garage door after the car had been stolen. Bartlett was beaten . . . battered to a pulp . . . a fighting bunch, give 'em credit, but they were done! King Moulton had crushed them. It was raining harder again now . . . a gloom was settling over the field . . . in ten more minutes it would be close to dark . . . in less than eight minutes the game would be history . . . and Pennington would be champion.

"Look at Bob! He's dressing inside that circle of subs!" cried a fan, "What do you know about that? Looks like everybody's giving him something to wear! . . . See! He's putting on someone else's jersey. There's

no number on the back. The jersey's on wrong side out! . . ."

"Oh, we had a terrible time getting here!" Anne recited hastily to her greatly excited room-mate, "Held up by a traffic jam and then . . . at a Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street we crashed into a car . . . shook us both up but didn't hurt us . . . injured the policeman and taxi driver, though . . . someone called the ambulance for them . . . but they both told us not to wait . . . had us get in another cab and finish our trip! My, it's a wonder Bob has any nerves left!"

"Well, what about yourself?" Norma asked admiringly, "If I'd been through all you have today! . . . Oh, Anne, there's something I want to tell you about Rusty . . .!"

The extremely late but very much "better than never" appearance of Bartlett's star full-back upon the muddy field of play was the signal for a gigantic ovation . . . undoubtedly as wild an acclamation as the historic confines of the Yankee Stadium, with all its prize fights, its baseball, its track meets and its grid games had been called upon to

witness. Many in the spectacular-sized crowd had journeyed hundreds of miles for the purpose of seeing what had been hailed as "the battle of the century" between the country's two outstanding football stars . . . and Bob Delano's sensational absence from the game had caused bitter disappointment. True, his successor had tried desperately to make his feet fill the mysteriously vacated shoes but, with all due respect to him, his number nines could hardly be made to fit number elevens. He had stretched them, however, a full size beyond anything he had ever done before, reaching his limit with the toeing of the pigskin over the bar for his team's only three points. This achieved, one Rusty Milburn was practically "out" on his feet and, blabbering joyfully that he was to give way to Bob, stumbled toward the sidelines.

"Good boy, Bob!" he called, as his former rival passed him, with the stadium a madhouse of noise.

The star fullback wheeled around and caught Rusty's arm.

"Where you going? Coach isn't taking you

out! You're shifting to half back. Stew's going to the bench!"

"What? . . . I'm being left in? . . ."

The news had the effect of a dash of cold water on the substitute fullback. His head came up, his hands clenched, his tired legs turned him about . . . carrying him, swayingly along, but nevertheless stride for stride with Bob.

"We'll show these babies!" he muttered, "I just been waiting for you, Bob! . . . Waiting the whole darn game! . . . Something I want to tell you . . . about Anne . . .!"

It was Bartlett's kick-off. With the crowd howling frenziedly, Bob upended the pigskin in the mud and paced back the proper distance. The referee's whistle shrilled and eleven strangely rejuvenated men, started down the field slightly behind their new entrant in the game whose toe collided with the oval, sending it spinning end over end, far into Pennington territory.

Pennington was downed on her eleven yard line and commenced a slow, smashing advance,

designed to hold the ball until the game's end. Bartlett, holding desperately, finally forced a punt and King Moulton dropped back behind his line, booting the water soaked pigskin more than fifty yards, the ball coming to rest on Bartlett's eight yard mark.

"Five more minutes," observed a fan, "That kick breaks Bartlett's heart!"

Bob immediately returned the punt and Pennington gained fifteen yards on the exchange. Their ball on Bartlett's forty-three yard mark.

"You see how much good your star does you?" razed an exultant Pennington rooter, "Too bad he couldn't have been in the whole game!"

"Get that ball back for Bob!" ordered quarterback Chapin, "That's the last thing I ask, fellows! Just get that ball back!"

On the first Pennington play, Big Jim Baker, exerting a tremendous effort, split the enemy line wide open. As he did so, the Pennington quarterback, about to pass the pigskin, fumbled. Through the hole made by Big Jim a lurching figure dove. A fractional second later a mound of arms and legs raised a human monument to the fact that the ball was some-

where underneath. And, as the last man was lifted from the bottom, face smeared, a great Bartlett cry rang out.

“Our ball! Yea, Rusty! Yea! Yea! Yea!”

“I had to do something,” the substitute full-back mumbled to himself, “For coach’s leaving me in the game!”

Time was getting short! As daylight waned the air was growing raw and penetrating. Some in the stands, despite the Bartlett star’s presence in the game, commenced moving toward the exits. It was all over. No use staying with the outcome assured, unless you were a son or daughter of Bartlett, in which case you should stick to the end, no matter how bitter, as a symbol of loyalty. And Bartlett *was* sticking . . . inspired by her team’s great last half fight . . . hoping, praying, imploring . . .!

Bartlett’s first play on getting the ball was a trick pass behind the line, dangerous with a slippery pigskin, but each of the hands through which the ball was required to pass, clutched it desperately in turn and passed it on finally to the much heralded Bob Delano who slid off around right end with it in the gathering dark-

ness. Interference formed around him, fell away, and magically formed again! At last the star fullback, heavy footed, plowed on alone, urged on by a throat-tearing din. He straight-armed a would-be tackler, tossing him face foremost in the mud. A little further on, in dodging another he slipped to his knees but was up again and on . . . on . . . with mad screams following him . . . splashing through water now . . . through territory that Bartlett had earlier found impassible. And now he was over the line after having completed the longest run of the game—for a touchdown!

“Yes, I’ll say it’s too bad our star couldn’t have been in the whole game!” retorted a joy-crazed Bartlett rooter to the Pennington fan’s thrust, “This old game would have been a different story!”

“Aw, he had a lot of luck on that!” was the rather lame reply. “A couple of our men slipped who ought to have tackled him. Yea! He missed the try for goal kick! . . . Catch King Moulton doing that! He hasn’t missed a point after touchdown this year!”

“Aw, dry up!” fired the Bartlett supporter.

Score: Pennington, 14; Bartlett, 9.

“Folks, this is a ball game!” cried Graham MacNamee over the mike, “You get what I mean? A *ball* game! But it’s too late, though . . . too late. Bartlett should have started earlier. I’ve never seen anything like it. I don’t think Phil has either. Never! Not even in California! Ha! Ha! Ha! . . . Bob Delano’s in the game now! Where he came from I don’t know, and I guess it’s nobody’s business! But the fact remains, he’s here—oh, HOW he’s here! . . . You’d be surprised what a difference one little football player makes . . . especially if he’s the right kind. And Bob’s the real article! I wish you all could have been here to have seen that marvelous run he made. Knee deep in mud most of the way! At least that’s the way it looked up here. . . . Ow, my voice! Sort of cracked, isn’t it? And I’m supposed to sing tomorrow night. That’s a joke! . . . Hello! There go the exit lights on in the stadium so you may know she’s getting dark. How much more time, Phil? . . . Three minutes! . . . Here they go . . . lining up! . . . Bartlett’s gone crazy . . .

Ha! Ha! . . . Phil says he's on the way there himself. . . . Can you hear me? I can't. Maybe it's a good thing . . . All right . . . the kick-off . . . Pennington receiving . . . ah, a fumble! . . . the ball is down . . . Pennington's ball on her own . . . let's see . . . you can hardly make it out from here . . . her own twelve yard line!"

On the first attempted play Crutch Edgcombe, at right tackle for Bartlett, broke through to drop the Pennington ball carrier for a four yard loss. The Pennington quarterback, playing safe, immediately ordered a punt. No use taking chances with the game so far gone and a Bartlett machine suddenly risen to its crest of power. King Moulton, outstanding star of the day, retired to his own goal line and stood, holding out mud-grimed hands for the ball, grinning defiance at his foes. Single-handed he was defeating Bartlett and this punt would be the finishing touch.

"*Block that kick!*" intreated Bartlett in a frenzied chant.

And Bartlett team members, eyeing one another, knew that the one supreme moment had

arrived. They had battled courageously in the face of mathematical oblivion. If one fractional percent of a chance remained, it must be realized *now*.

The ball snapped back and the opposing lines met in a great, upheaving mass. The Pennington line wavered, then buckled, and dirt-blackened forms leaped through, over the floundering figures of their team-mates. Foremost among those through the line was a fellow whom papers had heralded as an All-American possibility. A mighty leap and he was facing his greatest rival for that honor. King Moulton side-stepped the terrifying charge of his enemy . . . and kicked. But Bob, falling sidewise, blocked the whizzing pigskin with his chest. The ball, rebounding, rolled over the Pennington goal line. And, in the now lowered dusk, he, with Rusty, each unable to recognize the other, dove for the pigskin and clutched it madly, being almost instantly crushed into the mud by an avalanche of frantic Pennington men.

"It's over! It's over!" cried a hysterical voice.

But no one could really tell until the referee,

throwing himself into the tangled, wet mass, dug deep down and got his hands on the pig-skin which was still held in a death grip by the two forms on the bottom. Unable to tell, from their mud-encased togs, to which side they belonged, the referee turned them over to scrutinize their faces. Then he raised his arm in token of a touchdown and the Yankee Stadium vibrated with sound. The din was so terrific that no one heard the timer's whistle, ending the game . . . and it was not until substitutes came sliding through the mud to welcome their tired team-mates that the great crowd realized the game was over. There was no attempt made to kick the point after touchdown. It wasn't needed, for one thing, and there were too many joy-crazed spectators swarming onto the field, for another. An extremely dazed scorekeeper pinched himself in several places before daring to put up the final score.

BARTLETT 15

PENNINGTON 14

“And I can't believe it yet!” he said, as he looked up at it.

“It’s a miracle, folks! A miracle!” raved Graham MacNamee, “I’m soaking wet . . . my voice is gone . . . collar, too . . . but what of it? Bartlett won a ball game . . . and SUCH a ball game! Believe you me! And, oh, yes! They won the national football championship. We mustn’t forget that! Is everybody happy? Well, everybody but Pennington and they’re still trying to figure out how it happened. But I can tell ’em right now that nobody’ll ever know. It just happened, that’s all . . . and I don’t mean maybe! Oh, say—you ought to see those Bartlett rooters now! They’re splashing out into this football lake here . . . Isn’t that what you’d call it, Phil? Ha! Ha! Phil says it reminds him of Muscle Shoals. Just why, I don’t know. But, anyhow, they’re snake dancing through the lake and swimming toward the Pennington goal posts. And what are they going to do to ’em? One guess! Heigh-ho! Here they come . . . right up by the roots! The posts, I mean! Oh, yes! Ha! Ha! . . . Phil says if you want a good pair of rubbers, now’s the time to get ’em. They’re being sucked off by the dozens out here. And rain!

Say, how it's coming down now! But who cares? Listen to the band. The Bartlett crowd's got hold of Rusty Milburn and Bob Delano and they're carrying them around the field. I wonder what for? They didn't do anything! Oh, no! . . . Folks, there's sure going to be a big time in this man's town tonight! But not for me. I've had my big time this afternoon. If I had to walk out of here on my tonsils right this minute, I'd drop dead . . . !"

It was half an hour later before two girls, waiting in the corridor outside Bartlett's dressing room, were rewarded by the appearance of not one, but *two* star fullbacks.

"Oh, Rusty!" cried Norma.

And "Oh, Bob!" echoed Anne.

A convenient bend in the corridor afforded a nook away from passersby. But it was not secluded enough to prevent a certain excited young man and a decidedly plump young lady from finding them, some minutes later.

"So—here you are!" exclaimed Bartlett's distinguished playwright, "Edwina and I have been standing outside in the rain, waiting for

you to come out. Don't you know they're liable to lock this Stadium up for the season any minute? . . . And you can't live on love till spring!"

The two happy couples laughed.

"Then why did *you* risk coming in here?" asked Rusty.

"Oh, a playwright's used to living on nothing!" was Buzz's quick rejoinder.

"Well, I like that!" protested Edwina.

"Now, dearie, you know I didn't mean it!" soothed Buzz, "Folks, I've been dying to tell you a bit of news which transcends even Bartlett's great victory in importance!"

"That you're engaged?" guessed Anne.

"Well, er . . . Edwina is!" answered Buzz, face flushing, "She's to play the part of Gwen Murfee when my 'Money To Burn' appears on Broadway."

"What?"

"You're kidding!"

"No, he's not!" supported Edwina, proudly, "Show them the contract, Buzzer, all signed and everything!"

"The contract?" scoffed Bob's room-mate, "I'll show them the check! Here you are—

the little sum of five hundred dollars, advance royalty, paid me by Tweedy Productions, Limited!"

"Why, Buzz!" exclaimed Norma, "Congratulations!"

"Better wait!" advised Bob, "He hasn't cashed that check yet!"

"Oh, but it's perfectly good!" interposed Edwina, "Mr. Tweedy's my cousin and he wouldn't . . .!"

"Now, Edwina!" reproved the playwright, looking aggrieved, "I told you to keep this relation business out of it. People'll think this play wasn't accepted on its merits!"

The three couples started toward the door at sight of a stadium attendant obviously waiting for their retirement before locking up.

"Well, what I want to know is where *we* come in on this?" demanded Bob, "Aren't we entitled to a chance at playing our parts on Broadway?"

Buzz grinned.

"You should kick!" he rejoined, "Looks to me like you're more than playing your parts! Norma, too! But that's all right, Norma. I think, myself, I handed my character, Jacques

Brugnon, a dirty deal. And I'm darn glad to see he's got another Pauline."

Norma blushed prettily.

"In fact," corrected Rusty, "What you really meant to say was that we each now have someone to play opposite us."

"Let's hope it's play," said Buzz, cautiously. "And not fight!"

But, from the fond looks which the three sets of principals exchanged, it was more than evident that their life dramas would be played to a happy ending.

THE END

FOOTBALL AT ITS BEST

"Hot Off The Gridiron" Stories

UNDER THE GOAL POSTS

by EDDIE DOOLEY

A rousing story of college football by a great player.

By HAROLD M. SHERMAN

ONE MINUTE TO PLAY

There wasn't room in Red Wade's trunk for his football togs and his textbooks too—so he left his textbooks at home!

TOUCHDOWN!

A thrilling, smashing, breath-taking football story—introducing the "big three."

BLOCK THAT KICK!

Tingling romance, breath-taking mystery. Climaxed by a championship football game at the Yankee Stadium.

CRASHING THROUGH!

How a clever little quarterback kept his big rivals' fighting spirit at high pitch in order that his eleven might win a big game.

FIGHT 'EM, BIG THREE

Plenty of action on the gridiron and in other fields also. A story of three youths, Stuffy, Pepper and Brick.

GOAL TO GO!

Shrimp and Tubby, the "David and Goliath" of the Merwin College eleven, bring a great football crowd to its feet shouting like mad.

HOLD THAT LINE!

A story of the heart-breaking and nerve-trying experience one college player underwent before success.

NUMBER 44

How Bun Ritter, former mascot, becomes as famous as the mighty Branson, makes a story packed with football sensation!

GROSSET & DUNLAP

Publishers

NEW YORK

BOOKS FOR BOYS

Thrilling best-seller tales of mystery and adventure

THE SPOTLIGHT BOOKS

STOCKY OF LONE TREE RANCH.....	CHAS. H. SNOW
CRIMSON ICE.....	C. FITZSIMMONS
70,000 WITNESSES.....	C. FITZSIMMONS
DEATH ON THE DIAMOND.....	C. FITZSIMMONS
FLASH GORDON.....	ALEX RAYMOND
TAILSPIN TOMMY.....	MARK STEVENS
SMILEY ADAMS.....	R. J. BURROUGH
HAWK OF THE WILDERNESS.....	W. L. CHESTER
THE PONY EXPRESS.....	HENRY JAMES FORMAN
THE IRON HORSE.....	EDWIN C. HILL
THE MYSTERY OF THE YELLOW TIE..	

LAURENCE DWIGHT SMITH

THE LONE RANGER BOOKS

by FRAN STRIKER

THE LONE RANGER
THE LONE RANGER AND THE MYSTERY RANCH
THE LONE RANGER AND THE GOLD ROBBERY
THE LONE RANGER AND THE OUTLAW STRONGHOLD
THE LONE RANGER AND TONTO

THE G-MEN BOOKS

THE G-MEN SMASH THE
"PROFESSOR'S" GANG.....WILLIAM ENGLE
THE G-MEN IN JEOPARDY.....LAURENCE D. SMITH
THE G-MEN TRAP THE SPY RING..LAURENCE D. SMITH

THE JIMMIE DRURY BOOKS

by DAVID O'HARA

JIMMIE DRURY: CANDID CAMERA DETECTIVE
JIMMIE DRURY: WHAT THE DARK ROOM REVEALED
JIMMIE DRURY: CAUGHT BY THE CAMERA

GROSSET & DUNLAP

Publishers

NEW YORK

Books for Boys by a Master of Fiction

The Mark Tidd Stories

By CLARENCE BUDINGTON KELLAND

MARK TIDD

An ingenious fat boy and his three friends meet danger and excitement in solving the mystery of the strange footprint in their secret cave.

MARK TIDD IN BUSINESS

Mark and his three friends take Smalley's Bazaar and make a success of it, in spite of unfair competition from the villain of the story.

MARK TIDD, EDITOR

The resourceful fat boy runs a country newspaper. As editor, foreman of the press room, circulation manager and business manager, he makes the *Wicksville Trumpet* a paying proposition.

MARK TIDD, MANUFACTURER

The boys take over an old mill fallen into disrepair and soon have it showing a profit. How Mark outwits the unscrupulous representative of a big power company makes an irresistibly, funny book.

MARK TIDD IN THE BACKWOODS

Mark turns detective and foils a scheme to defraud his pal's uncle—an exciting story of mystery and fun.

MARK TIDD'S CITADEL

The boys run into mystery in a closed-up summer hotel where they rescue a kidnaped Samurai boy from his pursuers.

MARK TIDD IN ITALY

Here is fun and action aplenty and a story that will hold Mark's old friends and make many new ones.

GROSSET & DUNLAP : Publishers : NEW YORK

TALES OF ADVENTURE IN THE GREAT NORTHWEST

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

THE GRIZZLY KING

The story of Thor, the biggest grizzly in the Rockies, and the hunter who pursued but never shot him.

NOMADS OF THE NORTH

Neewa, the bear cub, and Miki, the pup, separated from their master, grow up in the wilderness until, in the end, they find him and bring to him the girl he loves.

SWIFT LIGHTNING

The adventures of a wolf in whose veins is a drop of dog blood. His desperate combats and killings, and his mating with a lost collie make a tale of breathless suspense.

THE WOLF HUNTERS

A tenderfoot, a young Indian and their faithful guide battle courageously with a savage band of outlaw Indians in the Canadian wilderness.

THE GOLD HUNTERS

A search for a lost gold mine leads the three heroes of "The Wolf Hunters" on a hazardous trail of mystery and amazing adventure.

BACK TO GOD'S COUNTRY

The courage and devotion of Wapi, the wolf dog, saves the life of a woman imprisoned on an ice-bound ship in the Far North.

THE GOLDEN SNARE

Philip Raine, of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, taken prisoner by the murderer he is pursuing, finds strange adventure with a half-mad wolf-man, a beautiful girl and a courageous Swede.

GROSSET & DUNLAP

Publishers

NEW YORK





